I am a heritage because I bring you years of thought and the lore of time ~ I impart yet I can not speak ~ I have traveled among the peoples of the earth ~ I am a rover ~ Oft-times I stray from the fireside of the one who loves and cherishes me - who misses me when I am gone ~ Should you find me vagrant please send me home - among my brothers - on the book shelves of .....

ALFRED SANTELL

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THE WORKS OF
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
VAILIMA EDITION

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THE WRONG BOX
ISLAND NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS
FATHER DAMIEN

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

NEW YORK
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THE WRONG BOX

WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH
LLOYD OSBOURNE

"Nothing like a little judicious levity," says Michael Finsbury in the text: nor can any better excuse be found for the volume in the reader's hand. The authors can but add that one of them is old enough to be ashamed of himself, and the other young enough to learn better.

R. L. S.
L. O.

PREFATORY NOTE

AFTER the death of my father-in-law there was no longer any reason for my husband's continued residence in England, where the climate was too harsh for his weak lungs; my mother-in-law, besides, needed an entire change of environment after the terrible strain she had undergone. The resolution taken, we were soon ready to start for Colorado, recommended by Dr. Balfour as the most suitable place for my husband, and at the same time offering the different surroundings that were thought necessary for his mother. The only obstacle in the way of our immediate departure was the long railway journey to Liverpool, my husband not being strong enough to endure the consequent fatigue; it occurred to us, however, that it might be possible to find a "tramp steamer" running between London and New York, which would entail only a couple of hours railway travelling. We were fortunate enough to secure passage on the *Ludgate Hill*, a large, comfortable steamship, carrying, according to the agent's statement, "notions," which we afterwards discovered to consist of French horses, matches, and hay.

The *Ludgate Hill* made a longer passage than usual; it was a season of wild weather, and several vessels from Liverpool that took the southern route to America were wrecked; but as we ran just north of the storm belt, we escaped with nothing worse than an occasional rough sea. The improvement in my husband's health soon began to show the wisdom of our migration; he grew stronger every day, enjoying to the full every moment of the voyage. In a letter to his cousin, Robert Alan Stevenson, he writes, "I was so happy on board that ship, I could not have believed it possible." The practice of his theory, "every man must earn the right to live," gave him many opportunities for usefulness; he looked after the comfort of some desperately seasick passengers, helped the purser, who was new to the position, and even, on one occasion, when the captain was imperatively needed elsewhere, led the Sunday morning service.

In England our life had been so secluded that my husband knew little of the outside world and its estimation of his work; he was, therefore, quite unprepared for the demonstrative welcome accorded him in America. On his arrival *Jekyll and Hyde* was being played to crowded houses in New York City, and at the same time used as the basis for sermons in several churches. Publishers made him offers for work, so large that he was afraid to accept them; I remember the *New York World* proposing that he

should write a series of weekly letters at what seemed to him the princely remuneration of eight thousand dollars a year. Though he refused this offer, he accepted another from the Scribners to furnish a series of "end papers" for their magazine at the same rate of payment. Not only was he now assured of the certainty of earning his livelihood by his pen, but other possibilities began to unfold themselves before his imagination.

The stimulation of the life in New York, added to the excitement of meeting so many old and new friends, soon began to tell on the strength my husband had gained by his voyage; besides, autumn was approaching, and it was time we made our plans for the winter. We had not realised before how long the railway journey would be from New York to Colorado, and the contemplation of such a trip was so alarming that we eagerly accepted the suggestion of a friend who proposed the Adirondacks as an alternative. Leaving my husband at the house of Mrs. Charles Fairchild, in Newport, to follow later, my son and I hastened to Saranac, where we hired a cottage from a guide named Baker, engaged a cook and a boy-of-all-work from the village, and with the help of my maid set up a sort of housekeeping that was very like camp-life.

The difficulties of managing a household under such primitive conditions as we had to contend with were manifold, and sometimes so unexpected that my

mother-in-law and I would be near despair. I remember one day, having just finished a meal that had caused us an immense expenditure of energy in gathering together its component parts, Francis, the chore-boy, casually remarked to the cook, "It would have been better to wait for Mr. Sullivan." Eager questioning brought out the fact that a telegram had come that morning from Mr. Sullivan announcing his intended arrival. The telegram had been read aloud to the loungers at the post-office, who instantly jumped to the conclusion that our visitor must be the pugilist, John L. Sullivan, who was a recent winner in a great prize fight. In the excitement nobody thought of sending the telegram to its legitimate destination, but hastened to the station, where they awaited the arrival of Mr. T. R. Sullivan for hours. The unconscious victim of this ludicrous mistake was surprised and embarrassed by the sensation he created, his "points" being audibly discussed as he passed through the crowd.

With the approach of winter the cold grew more and more intense; in spite of great log-fires, buffalo coats, and rugs, and the hermetical sealing of door after door and all the windows, it became almost unendurable. Our thoughts and our talk turned to the tropics, and while we shivered round our immense fireplace, we dreamed of palm-trees and Southern seas. The appreciation and generosity of American publishers having now made his long-cherished dream

of a small yacht appear almost feasible, my husband sent to New York for maps and books of reference. I believe some of the happiest hours of his life were spent in the study of Findlay's directories of the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the South Seas, looking up soundings, and going into every detail of an extended cruise. Some time after his death, Captain Joshua Slocum, on his way round the world alone in the little sloop *Spray*, came to the house at Vailima. Here, I thought, was a mariner after my husband's own heart; who had a better right to the directories than this man who was about to sail those very seas with no other guide than the stars and a small, broken clock that served in place of a chronometer? Captain Slocum received the volumes with reverence, and used them, as he afterwards told me, to his great advantage.

Among our visitors to Saranac came Mr. S. S. McClure, who listened with absorbing interest to our schemes, and offered to advance the money for the proposed yacht expedition, to be reimbursed by letters, or articles, written during the voyage. But my husband felt that in his precarious state of health he had no right to involve Mr. McClure in such a risk. Though stronger than for several years previous, he was somewhat exhausted by his winter's work, the exigencies of the bitter climate of Saranac, and the influx of visitors, which was a great, though fatiguing, pleasure to one who had been for so long

cut off from almost all intercourse with his friends. With the spring approaching, and the time near at hand when a decision must be reached, he thought that if he could only find an easy way to make a thousand pounds he could dare venture on the yacht cruise (he had now settled on the islands north of Madagascar as an objective point) with no fear of causing loss to another.

My son, then a lad of nineteen, had passed the winter at Saranac in the enthralling occupation of writing a novel, which he then intended to call *A Game of Bluff*. The story finished, it was read aloud to the family, a few chapters each evening. It seemed to us all a rather creditable effort for a boy of that age, and my husband remarked that it would be very easy to pull it together and "make it go." It was then that collaboration occurred to him. Here was the chance to earn the money for the yacht cruise.

A Game of Bluff, now rechristened *The Wrong Box*, was overhauled and rewritten in a few weeks with such high spirits and hilarity that the authors began to take a higher view of its merits than they did on reading it in cold type under other circumstances. My husband found collaboration such an agreeable and easy method of accomplishing work that he afterwards, in Honolulu, when unfit for more serious exertion, took up another unfinished story of his stepson's called *The Pearl Fisher:* but after

some half dozen chapters had been sketched out it was dropped in favour of *The Ebb-Tide.*

With the coming of spring we found we must definitely make up our minds as to what course we should pursue. Leaving the family about to start for Manasquan, in New Jersey, I went to San Francisco, where I found and chartered the yacht *Casco* for a six months' cruise. Had it not been for the ease and facility with which *The Wrong Box* was made ready for the press, giving a comfortable assurance for the future, I doubt if the yacht scheme would have remained anything more than a pleasant day-dream. Nor would my husband have found that haven in Samoa which was the means of prolonging his life, and enabling him to give to the world the best work of his maturity.

F. V. DE G. S.

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THE WRONG BOX

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH MORRIS SUSPECTS

OW very little does the amateur, dwelling at home at ease, comprehend the labours and perils of the author, and, when he smilingly skims the surface of a work of fiction, how little does he consider the hours of toil, consultation of authorities, researches in the Bodleian, correspondence with learned and illegible Germans—in one word, the vast scaffolding that was first built up and then knocked down, to while away an hour for him in a railway train! Thus I might begin this tale with a biography of Tonti—birthplace, parentage, genius probably inherited from his mother, remarkable instance of precocity, etc.—and a complete treatise on the system to which he bequeathed his name. The material is all beside me in a pigeon-hole, but I scorn to appear vainglorious. Tonti is dead, and I never saw any one who even pretended to regret him; and

as for the tontine system, a word will suffice for all the purposes of this unvarnished narrative.

A number of sprightly youths (the more the merrier) put up a certain sum of money, which is then funded in a pool under trustees; coming on for a century later, the proceeds are fluttered for a moment in the face of the last survivor, who is probably deaf, so that he cannot even hear of his success—and who is certainly dying, so that he might just as well have lost. The peculiar poetry and even humour of the scheme is now apparent, since it is one by which nobody concerned can possibly profit; but its fine, sportsman-like character endeared it to our grand-parents.

When Joseph Finsbury and his brother Masterman were little lads in white-frilled trousers, their father—a well-to-do merchant in Cheapside—caused them to join a small but rich tontine of seven and thirty lives. A thousand pounds was the entrance fee; and Joseph Finsbury can remember to this day the visit to the lawyer's where the members of the tontine—all children like himself—were assembled together and sat in turn in the big office-chair, and signed their names with the assistance of a kind old gentleman in spectacles and Wellington boots. He remembers playing with the children afterward on the lawn at the back of the lawyer's house, and a battle-royal that he had with a brother tontiner, who had kicked his shins. The

sound of war called forth the lawyer from where he was dispensing cake and wine to the assembled parents in the office, and the combatants were separated, and Joseph's spirit (for he was the smaller of the two) commended by the gentleman in the Wellington boots, who vowed he had been just such another at the same age. Joseph wondered to himself if he had worn at that time little Wellingtons and a little bald head, and when, in bed at night, he grew tired of telling himself stories of sea-fights, he used to dress himself up as the old gentleman, and entertain other little boys and girls with cake and wine.

In the year 1840 the thirty-seven were all alive; in 1850 their number had decreased by six; in 1856 and 1857 business was more lively, for the Crimea and the Mutiny carried off no less than nine. There remained in 1870 but five of the original members, and at the date of my story, including the two Finsburys, but three.

By this time Masterman was in his seventy-third year; he had long complained of the effects of age, had long since retired from business, and now lived in absolute seclusion under the roof of his son Michael, the well-known solicitor. Joseph, on the other hand, was still up and about, and still presented but a semi-venerable figure on the streets in which he loved to wander. This was the more to be deplored, because Masterman had led (even to the least particular) a model British life. Industry, regularity, re-

spectability, and a preference for the four per cents. are understood to be the very foundations of a green old age. All these Masterman had eminently displayed, and here he was, *ab agendo*, at seventy-three; while Joseph, barely two years younger, and in the most excellent preservation, had disgraced himself through life by idleness and eccentricity. Embarked in the leather trade, he had early wearied of business, for which he was supposed to have small parts. A taste for general information, not promptly checked, had soon begun to sap his manhood. There is no passion more debilitating to the mind, unless, perhaps, it be that itch of public speaking which it not infrequently accompanies or begets. The two were conjoined in the case of Joseph; the acute stage of this double malady, that in which the patient delivers gratuitous lectures, soon declared itself with severity, and not many years had passed over his head before he would have travelled thirty miles to address an infant-school. He was no student; his reading was confined to elementary text-books and the daily papers; he did not even fly as high as cyclopædias; life, he would say, was his volume. His lectures were not meant (he would declare) for college professors; they were addressed direct to "the great heart of the people," and the heart of the people must certainly be sounder than its head, for his lucubrations were received with favour. That entitled, "How to Live Cheer-

fully on Forty Pounds a Year," created a sensation among the unemployed. "Education: Its Aims, Objects, Purposes, and Desirability," gained him the respect of the shallow-minded. As for his celebrated essay on "Life Insurance Regarded in its Relation to the Masses," read before the Working Men's Mutual Improvement Society, Isle of Dogs, it was received with a "literal ovation" by an unintelligent audience of both sexes. And so marked was the effect that he was next year elected honorary president of the institution, an office of less than no emolument, since the holder was expected to come down with a donation, but one which highly satisfied his self-esteem.

While Joseph was thus building himself up a reputation among the more cultivated portion of the ignorant, his domestic life was suddenly overwhelmed by orphans. The death of his younger brother Jacob saddled him with the charge of two boys, Morris and John; and in the course of the same year his family was still further swelled by the addition of a little girl, the daughter of John Henry Hazeltine, Esq., a gentleman of small property and fewer friends. He had met Joseph only once, at a lecture-hall in Holloway; but from that formative experience he returned home to make a new will, and consign his daughter and her fortune to the lecturer. Joseph had a kindly disposition; and yet it was not without reluctance that he accepted this new

responsibility, advertised for a nurse, and purchased a second-hand perambulator. Morris and John he made more readily welcome; not so much because of the tie of consanguinity as because the leather business (in which he hastened to invest their fortune and thirty thousand pounds) had recently exhibited inexplicable symptoms of decline. A young but capable Scot was chosen as manager to the enterprise and the cares of business never again afflicted Joseph Finsbury. Leaving his charges in the hands of the capable Scot (who was married), he began his extensive travels on the Continent and in Asia Minor.

With a polyglot Testament in one hand and a phrase-book in the other, he groped his way among the speakers of eleven European languages. The first of these guides is hardly applicable to the purposes of the philosophic traveller, and even the second is designed more expressly for the tourist than for the expert in life. But he pressed interpreters into his service—whenever he could get their services for nothing—and by one means and another filled many note-books with the results of his researches.

In these wanderings he spent several years, and only returned to England when the increasing age of his charges needed his attention. The two lads had been placed in a good but economical school, where they had received a sound commercial education; which was somewhat

awkward, as the leather business was by no means in a state to court inquiry. In fact, when Joseph went over his accounts preparatory to surrendering his trust, he was dismayed to discover that his brother's fortune had not increased by his stewardship; even by making over to his two wards every penny he had in the world, there would still be a deficit of seven thousand eight hundred pounds. When these facts were communicated to the two brothers in the presence of a lawyer, Morris Finsbury threatened his uncle with all the terrors of the law and was only prevented from taking extreme steps by the advice of the professional man.

"You cannot get blood from a stone," observed the lawyer.

And Morris saw the point, and came to terms with his uncle. On the one side, Joseph, gave up all that he possessed and assigned to his nephew his contingent interest in the tontine, already quite a hopeful speculation. On the other, Morris agreed to harbour his uncle and Miss Hazeltine (who had come to grief with the rest) and to pay to each of them one pound a month as pocket-money. The allowance was amply sufficient for the old man; it scarce appears how Miss Hazeltine contrived to dress upon it; but she did, and, what is more, she never complained. She was, indeed, sincerely attached to her incompetent guardian. He had never been unkind; his age spoke for him loudly; there was

something appealing in his whole-souled quest of knowledge and innocent delight in the smallest mark of admiration; and though the lawyer had warned her she was being sacrificed, Julia had refused to add to the perplexities of Uncle Joseph.

In a large, dreary house in John Street, Bloomsbury, these four dwelt together; a family in appearance, in reality a financial association. Julia and Uncle Joseph were, of course, slaves; John, a gentleman with a taste for the banjo, the music-hall, the Gaiety bar, and the sporting papers, must have been anywhere a secondary figure; and the cares and delights of empire devolved entirely upon Morris. That these are inextricably intermixed is one of the commonplaces with which the bland essayist consoles the incompetent and the obscure, but in the case of Morris the bitter must have largely outweighed the sweet. He grudged no trouble to himself, he spared none to others; he called the servants in the morning, he served out the stores with his own hand, he took soundings of the sherry, he numbered the remainder biscuits; painful scenes took place over the weekly bills, and the cook was frequently impeached, and the tradespeople came and hectored with him in the back parlour, upon a question of three farthings. The superficial might have deemed him a miser; in his own eyes he was simply a man who had been defrauded; the world owed him seven

thousand eight hundred pounds, and he intended that the world should pay.

But it was in his dealings with Joseph that Morris's character particularly shone. His uncle was a rather gambling stock in which he had invested heavily; and he spared no pains in nursing the security. The old man was seen monthly by a physician, whether he was well or ill. His diet, his raiment, his occasional outings, now to Brighton, now to Bournemouth, were doled out to him like pap to infants. In bad weather he must keep the house. In good weather, by half-past nine, he must be ready in the hall; Morris would see that he had gloves and that his shoes were sound; and the pair would start for the leather business arm in arm. The way there was probably dreary enough, for there was no pretence of friendly feeling; Morris had never ceased to upbraid his guardian with his defalcation and to lament the burthen of Miss Hazeltine; and Joseph, though he was a mild enough soul, regarded his nephew with something very near akin to hatred. But the way there was nothing to the journey back; for the mere sight of the place of business, as well as every detail of its transactions, was enough to poison life for any Finsbury.

Joseph's name was still over the door; it was he who still signed the cheques; but this was only policy on the part of Morris, and designed to discourage other members of the tontine. In

reality, the business was entirely his; and he found it an inheritance of sorrows. He tried to sell it, and the offers he received were quite derisory. He tried to extend it, and it was only the liabilities he succeeded in extending; to restrict it, and it was only the profits he managed to restrict. Nobody had ever made money out of that concern except the capable Scot, who retired (after his discharge) to the neighbourhood of Banff and built a castle with his profits. The memory of this fallacious Caledonian, Morris would revile daily, as he sat in the private office opening his mail, with old Joseph at another table, sullenly awaiting orders, or savagely affixing signatures to he knew not what. And when the man of the heather pushed cynicism so far as to send him the announcement of his second marriage (to Davida, eldest daughter of the Rev. Alexander McCraw) it was really supposed that Morris would have had a fit.

Business hours, in the Finsbury leather trade, had been cut to the quick; even Morris's strong sense of duty to himself was not strong enough to dally within those walls and under the shadow of that bankruptcy; and presently the manager and the clerks would draw a long breath, and compose themselves for another day of procrastination. Raw Haste, on the authority of my Lord Tennyson, is half-sister to Delay; but the Business Habits are certainly her uncles. Meanwhile the leather merchant would lead his living

investment back to John Street like a puppy dog; and having there immured him in the hall, would depart for the day on the quest of seal rings, the only passion of his life. Joseph had more than the vanity of man, he had that of lecturers. He owned he was in fault; although more sinned against (by the capable Scot) than sinning; but had he steeped his hands in gore, he would still not deserve to be thus dragged at the chariot-wheels of a young man, to sit a captive in the halls of his own leather business, to be entertained with mortifying comments on his whole career—to have his costume examined, his collar pulled up, the presence of his mittens verified, and to be taken out and brought home in custody, like an infant with a nurse. At the thought of it his soul would swell with venom, and he would make haste to hang up his hat and coat and the detested mittens, and slink up-stairs to Julia and his note-books. The drawing-room at least was sacred from Morris; it belonged to the old man and the young girl; it was there that she made her dresses; it was there that he inked his spectacles over the registration of disconnected facts and the calculation of insignificant statistics.

Here he would sometimes lament his connection with the tontine. "If it were not for that," he cried one afternoon, "he would not care to keep me. I might be a free man, Julia. And I could so easily support myself by giving lectures."

"To be sure you could," said she; "and I think it one of the meanest things he ever did to deprive you of that amusement. There were those nice people at the Isle of Cats (wasn't it?) who wrote and asked you so very kindly to give them an address. I did think he might have let you go to the Isle of Cats."

"He is a man of no intelligence," cried Joseph. "He lives here literally surrounded by the absorbing spectacle of life, and for all the good it does him, he might just as well be in his coffin. Think of his opportunities! The heart of any other young man would burn within him at the chance. The amount of information that I have it in my power to convey, if he would only listen, is a thing that beggars language, Julia."

"Whatever you do, my dear, you mustn't excite yourself," said Julia; "for you know, if you look at all ill, the doctor will be sent for."

"That is very true," returned the old man, humbly. "I will compose myself with a little study." He thumbed his gallery of notebooks. "I wonder," he said, "I wonder (since I see your hands are occupied) whether it might not interest you——"

"Why, of course it would," cried Julia. "Read me one of your nice stories, there's a dear!"

He had the volume down and his spectacles upon his nose instanter, as though to forestall some possible retractation. "What I propose

to read to you," said he, skimming through the pages, "is the notes of a highly important conversation with a Dutch courier of the name of David Abbas, which is the Latin for abbot. Its results are well worth the money it cost me, for, as Abbas at first appeared somewhat impatient, I was induced to (what is, I believe, singularly called) stand him drink. It runs only to about five-and-twenty pages. Yes, here it is." He cleared his throat, and began to read.

Mr. Finsbury (according to his own report) contributed about four hundred and ninety-nine five-hundredths of the interview, and elicited from Abbas literally nothing. It was dull for Julia, who did not require to listen; for the Dutch courier, who had to answer, it must have been a perfect nightmare. It would seem as if he had consoled himself by frequent applications to the bottle; it would even seem that (toward the end) he had ceased to depend on Joseph's frugal generosity, and called for the flagon on his own account. The effect, at least, of some mellowing influence was visible in the record: Abbas became suddenly a willing witness; he began to volunteer disclosures; and Julia had just looked up from her seam with something like a smile, when Morris burst into the house, eagerly calling for his uncle, and the next instant plunged into the room, waving in the air the evening paper.

It was indeed with great news that he came

charged. The demise was announced of Lieutenant-General Sir Glasgow Biggar, K. C. S. I., K. C. M. G., etc., and the prize of the tontine now lay between the Finsbury brothers. Here was Morris's opportunity at last. The brothers had never, it is true, been cordial. When word came that Joseph was in Asia Minor, Masterman had expressed himself with irritation. "I call it simply indecent," he had said. "Mark my words—we shall hear of him next at the North Pole." And these bitter expressions had been reported to the traveller on his return. What was worse, Masterman had refused to attend the lecture on "Education; Its Aims, Objects, Purpose, and Desirability," although invited to the platform. Since then, the brothers had not met. On the other hand, they never had openly quarrelled; Joseph (by Morris's orders) was prepared to waive the advantage of his juniority; Masterman had enjoyed all through life the reputation of a man neither greedy nor unfair. Here, then, were all the elements of compromise assembled; and Morris, suddenly beholding his seven thousand eight hundred pounds restored to him, and himself dismissed from the vicissitudes of the leather trade, hastened the next morning to the office of his cousin Michael.

Michael was something of a public character. Launched upon the law at a very early age, and quite without protectors, he had become a trafficker in shady affairs. He was known to be the

man for a lost cause, it was known he could extract testimony from a stone, and interest from a gold mine; and his office was besieged in consequence by all that numerous class of persons who have still some reputation to lose, and find themselves upon the point of losing it; by those who have made undesirable acquaintances, who have mislaid a compromising correspondence, or who are blackmailed by their own butlers. In private life, Michael was a man of pleasure; but it was thought his dire experience at the office had gone far to sober him, and it was known that (in the matter of investments) he preferred the solid to the brilliant. What was yet more to the purpose, he had been all his life a consistent scoffer at the Finsbury tontine.

It was therefore with little fear for the result that Morris presented himself before his cousin, and proceeded feverishly to set forth his scheme. For near upon a quarter of an hour, the lawyer suffered him to dwell upon its manifest advantages uninterrupted. Then Michael rose from his seat, and ringing for his clerk, uttered a single clause.

"It won't do, Morris."

It was in vain that the leather merchant pleaded and reasoned, and returned day after day to plead and reason. It was in vain that he offered a bonus of one thousand, of two thousand, of three thousand pounds; in vain that he offered, in Joseph's name, to be content with only one-

third of the pool. Still there came the same answer: "It won't do."

"I can't see the bottom of this," he said at last. "You answer none of my arguments, you haven't a word to say. For my part, I believe it's malice."

The lawyer smiled at him benignly. "You may believe one thing," said he; "whatever else I do, I am not going to gratify any of your curiosity. You see I am a trifle more communicative to-day, because this is our last interview upon the subject."

"Our last interview!" cried Morris.

"The stirrup-cup, dear boy," returned Michael. "I can't have my business hours encroached upon. And by the by, have you no business of your own? Are there no convulsions in the leather trade?"

"I believe it to be malice," repeated Morris, doggedly. "You always hated and despised me from a boy."

"No, no—not hated," returned Michael, soothingly. "I rather like you than otherwise; there's such a permanent surprise about you, you look so dark and attractive from a distance. Do you know that to the naked eye you look romantic?—like what they call a man with a history. And indeed, from all that I can hear the history of the leather trade is full of incident."

"Yes," said Morris, disregarding these re-

marks, "it's no use coming here, I shall see your father."

"Oh, no, you won't," said Michael. "Nobody shall see my father."

"I should like to know why," cried his cousin.

"I never make any secret of that," replied the lawyer. "He is too ill."

"If he is as ill as you say," cried the other, "the more reason for accepting my proposal. I *will* see him."

"Will you?" said Michael, and he rose and rang for his clerk.

It was now time, according to Sir Faraday Bond, the medical baronet whose name is so familiar at the foot of bulletins, that Joseph (the poor Golden Goose) should be removed into the purer air of Bournemouth; and for that uncharted wilderness of villas the family now shook off the dust of Bloomsbury: Julia delighted, because at Bournemouth she sometimes made acquaintances; John in despair, for he was a man of city tastes; Joseph indifferent where he was, so long as there was pen and ink and daily papers, and he could avoid martyrdom at the office; Morris himself, perhaps, not displeased to pretermit these visits to the city, and have a quiet time for thought. He was prepared for any sacrifice; all he desired was to get his money again and clear his feet of leather; and it would be strange, since he was so modest in his desires and the pool amounted to upward of a hundred

and sixteen thousand pounds—it would be strange, indeed, if he could find no way of influencing Michael. "If I could only guess his reason," he repeated to himself; and by day, as he walked in Branksome woods, and by night, as he turned upon his bed, and at meal-times, when he forgot to eat, and in the bathing machine, when he forgot to dress himself, that problem was constantly before him: why had Michael refused?

At last, one night, he burst into his brother's room and woke him.

"What's all this?" asked John.

"Julia leaves this place to-morrow," replied Morris; "she must go up to town and get the house ready, and find servants. We shall all follow in three days."

"Oh, brayvo!" cried John. "But why?"

"I've found it out, John," returned his brother, gently.

"It? What?" inquired John.

"Why Michael won't compromise," said Morris. "It's because he can't. It's because Masterman's dead, and he's keeping it dark."

"Golly!" cried the impressionable John. "But what's the use? why does he do it, anyway?"

"To defraud us of the tontine," said his brother.

"He couldn't; you have to have a doctor's certificate," objected John.

"Did you never hear of venal doctors?" inquired Morris. "They're as common as blackberries; you can pick 'em up for three-pound-ten a head."

"I wouldn't do it under fifty if I were a sawbones," ejaculated John.

"And then Michael," continued Morris, "is in the very thick of it. All his clients have come to grief; his whole business is rotten eggs. If any man could arrange it, he could; and depend upon it, he has his plan all straight; and depend upon it, it's a good one, for he's clever, and be damned to him! But I'm clever, too; and I'm desperate. I lost seven thousand eight hundred pounds when I was an orphan at school."

"Oh, don't be tedious," interrupted John. "You've lost far more already trying to get it back."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MORRIS TAKES ACTION

SOME days later, accordingly, the three males of this depressing family might have been observed (by a reader of G. P. R. James) taking their departure from the East Station of Bournemouth. The weather was raw and changeable, and Joseph was arrayed in consequence according to the principles of Sir Faraday Bond, a man no less strict (as is well known) on costume than on diet. There are few polite invalids who have not lived, or tried to live, by that punctilious physician's orders. "Avoid tea, madam," the reader has doubtless heard him say, "avoid tea, fried liver, antimonial wine, and bakers' bread. Retire nightly at 10:45; and clothe yourself (if you please) throughout in hygienic flannel. Externally, the fur of the marten is indicated. Do not forget to procure a pair of health boots at Messrs. Dall and Crumbie's." And he has probably called you back, even after you have paid your fee, to add with stentorian emphasis: "I had forgotten one caution: avoid kippered sturgeon, as you would the

very devil!" The unfortunate Joseph was cut to the pattern of Sir Faraday in every button; he was shod with the health boot; his suit was of genuine ventilating cloth; his shirt of hygienic flannel, a somewhat dingy fabric; and he was draped to the knees in the inevitable great-coat of marten's fur. The very railway porters at Bournemouth (which was a favourite station of the doctor's) marked the old gentleman for a creature of Sir Faraday. There was but one evidence of personal taste, a vizarded forage-cap; from this form of headpiece, since he had fled from a dying jackal on the plains of Ephesus and weathered a bora in the Adriatic, nothing could divorce our traveller.

The three Finsburys mounted into their compartment and fell immediately to quarrelling, a step unseemly in itself and (in this case) highly unfortunate for Morris. Had he lingered a moment longer by the window, this tale need never have been written. For he might then have observed (as the porters did not fail to do) the arrival of a second passenger in the uniform of Sir Faraday Bond. But he had other matters on hand which he judged (God knows how erroneously) to be more important.

"I never heard of such a thing," he cried, resuming a discussion which had scarcely ceased all morning. "The bill is not yours; it is mine."

"It is payable to me," returned the old gentle-

man, with an air of bitter obstinacy. "I will do what I please with my own property."

The bill was one for eight hundred pounds, which had been given him at breakfast to endorse, and which he had simply pocketed.

"Hear him, Johnny!" cried Morris. "His property! the very clothes upon his back belong to me."

"Let him alone," said John, "I'm sick of both of you."

"That is no way to speak of your uncle, sir," cried Joseph. "I will not endure this disrespect. You are a pair of exceedingly forward, impudent, and ignorant young men, and I have quite made up my mind to put an end to the whole business."

"Oh, skittles!" said the graceful John.

But Morris was not so easy in his mind. This unusual act of insubordination had already troubled him; and these mutinous words now sounded ominously in his ears. He looked at the old gentleman uneasily. Upon one occasion many years before, when Joseph was delivering a lecture, the audience had revolted in a body; finding their entertainer somewhat dry, they had taken the question of amusement into their own hands; and the lecturer (along with the board schoolmaster, the Baptist clergyman, and a working-man's candidate, who made up his bodyguard) was ultimately driven from the scene. Morris had not been present on that

fatal day; if he had, he would have recognised a certain fighting glitter in his uncle's eye, and a certain chewing movement of his lips, as old acquaintances. But even to the inexpert these symptoms breathed of something dangerous.

"Well, well," said Morris. "I have no wish to bother you further till we get to London."

Joseph did not so much as look at him in answer; with tremulous hands he produced a copy of the *British Mechanic*, and ostentatiously buried himself in its perusal.

"I wonder what can make him so cantankerous?" reflected the nephew. "I don't like the look of it at all." And he dubiously scratched his nose.

The train travelled forth into the world, bearing along with it the customary freight of obliterated voyagers, and along with these old Joseph, affecting immersion in his paper, and John, slumbering over the columns of the *Pink Un*, and Morris, revolving in his mind a dozen grudges, and suspicions, and alarms. It passed Christchurch by the sea, Herne with its pine-woods, Ringwood on its mazy river. A little behind time, but not much for the South-Western, it drew up at the platform of a station, in the midst of the New Forest, the real name of which (in case the railway company "might have the law of me") I shall veil under the *alias* of Browndean.

Many passengers put their heads to the window, and among the rest an old gentleman on

whom I willingly dwell, for I am nearly done with him now, and (in the whole course of the present narrative) I am not in the least likely to meet another character so decent. His name is immaterial, not so his habits. He had passed his life wandering in a tweed suit on the continent of Europe; and years of *Galignani's Messenger* having at length undermined his eyesight, he suddenly remembered the rivers of Assyria and came to London to consult an oculist. From the oculist to the dentist, and from both to the physician, the step appears inevitable; presently he was in the hands of Sir Faraday, robed in ventilating cloth and sent to Bournemouth; and to that domineering baronet (who was his only friend upon his native soil) he was now returning to report. The case of these tweed-suited wanderers is unique. We have all seen them entering the table d'hôte (at Spezzia, or Gratz, or Venice) with a genteel melancholy and a faint appearance of having been to India and not succeeded; in the offices of many hundred hotels, they are known by name; and yet, if the whole of this wandering cohort were to disappear tomorrow, their absence would be wholly unremarked. How much more, if only one—say this one in the ventilating cloth—should vanish! He had paid his bills at Bournemouth; his worldly effects were all in the van in two portmanteaus, and these after the proper interval would be sold as unclaimed baggage to a Jew; Sir

Faraday's butler would be a half-crown poorer at the year's end, and the hotel-keepers of Europe about the same date would be mourning a small but quite observable decline in profits. And that would be literally all. Perhaps the old gentleman thought something of the sort, for he looked melancholy enough as he pulled his bare, grey head back into the carriage, and the train smoked under the bridge and forth, with ever quickening speed, across the mingled heaths and woods of the New Forest.

Not many hundred yards beyond Browndean, however, a sudden jarring of brakes set everybody's teeth on edge, and there was a brutal stoppage. Morris Finsbury was aware of a confused uproar of voices, and sprang to the window. Women were screaming, men were tumbling from the windows on the track, the guard was crying to them to stay where they were; at the same time the train began to gather way and move very slowly backward toward Browndean; and the next moment, all these various sounds were blotted out in the apocalyptic whistle and the thundering onslaught of the down express.

The actual collision Morris did not hear. Perhaps he fainted. He had a wild dream of having seen the carriage double up and fall to pieces like a pantomime trick; and sure enough, when he came to himself, he was lying on the bare earth and under the open sky. His head ached savagely; he carried his hand to his brow

and was not surprised to see it red with blood. The air was filled with an intolerable, throbbing roar, which he expected to find die away with the return of consciousness; and instead of that it seemed but to swell the louder and to pierce the more cruelly through his ears. It was a raging, bellowing thunder, like a boiler-riveting factory.

And now curiosity began to stir, and he sat up and looked about him. The track at this point ran in a sharp curve about a wooded hillock; all of the near side was heaped with the wreckage of the Bournemouth train; that of the express was mostly hidden by the trees; and just at the turn, under clouds of vomiting steam and piled about with cairns of living coal, lay what remained of the two engines, one upon the other. On the heathy margin of the line were many people running to and fro, and crying aloud as they ran, and many others lying motionless like sleeping tramps.

Morris suddenly drew an inference. "There has been an accident!" thought he, and was elated at his perspicacity. Almost at the same time his eye lighted on John, who lay close by as white as paper. "Poor old John! poor old cove!" he thought, the schoolboy expression popping forth from some forgotten treasury, and he took his brother's hand in his with childish tenderness. It was perhaps the touch that recalled him; at least John opened his eyes, sat suddenly up, and after several ineffectual move-

ments of his lips, "What's the row?" said he, in a phantom voice.

The din of that devil's smithy still thundered in their ears. "Let us get away from that," Morris cried, and pointed to the vomit of steam that still spouted from the broken engines. And the pair helped each other up, and stood and quaked and wavered and stared about them at the scene of death.

Just then they were approached by a party of men who had already organised themselves for the purposes of rescue.

"Are you hurt?" cried one of these, a young fellow with the sweat streaming down his pallid face, and who by the way he was treated was evidently the doctor.

Morris shook his head, and the young man, nodding grimly, handed him a bottle of some spirit.

"Take a drink of that," he said, "your friend looks as if he needed it badly. We want every man we can get," he added; "there's terrible work before us, and nobody should shirk. If you can do no more you can carry a stretcher."

The doctor was hardly gone before Morris, under the spur of the dram, awoke to the full possession of his wits.

"My God!" he cried. "Uncle Joseph!"

"Yes," said John, "where can he be? He can't be far off. I hope the old party isn't damaged."

"Come and help me to look," said Morris, with a snap of savage determination strangely foreign to his ordinary bearing; and then, for one moment, he broke forth, "If he's dead!" he cried, and shook his fist at heaven.

To and fro the brothers hurried, staring in the faces of the wounded, or turning the dead upon their backs. They must have thus examined forty people, and still there was no word of Uncle Joseph. But now the course of their search brought them near the centre of the collision, where the boilers were still blowing off steam with a deafening clamour. It was a part of the field not yet gleaned by the rescuing party. The ground, especially on the margin of the wood, was full of inequalities—here a pit, there a hillock surmounted with a bush of furze. It was a place where many bodies might lie concealed, and they beat it like pointers after game. Suddenly Morris, who was leading, paused and reached forth his index with a tragic gesture. John followed the direction of his brother's hand.

In the bottom of a sandy hole lay something that had once been human. The face had suffered severely, and it was unrecognisable; but that was not required. The snowy hair, the coat of marten, the ventilating cloth, the hygienic flannel—everything down to the health boots from Messrs. Dall and Crumbie's, identified the body as that of Uncle Joseph. Only the

forage-cap must have been lost in the convulsion, for the dead man was bareheaded.

"The poor old beggar!" said John, with a touch of natural feeling; "I would give ten pounds if we hadn't chivied him in the train!"

But there was no sentiment in the face of Morris as he gazed upon the dead. Gnawing his nails, with introverted eyes, his brow marked with the stamp of tragic indignation and tragic intellectual effort, he stood there silent. Here was a last injustice; he had been robbed while he was an orphan at school, he had been lashed to a decadent leather business, he had been saddled with Miss Hazeltine, his cousin had been defrauding him of the tontine, and he had borne all this, we might almost say, with dignity, and now they had gone and killed his uncle!

"Here!" he said suddenly, "take his heels, we must get him into the woods. I'm not going to have anybody find this."

"O, fudge!" said John, "where's the use?"

"Do what I tell you," spirted Morris, as he took the corpse by the shoulders. "Am I to carry him myself?"

They were close upon the borders of the wood; in ten or twelve paces they were under cover; and a little farther back, in a sandy clearing of the trees, they laid their burthen down, and stood and looked at it with loathing.

"What do you mean to do?" whispered John.

"Bury him, to be sure!" responded Morris,

and he opened his pocket-knife and began feverishly to dig.

"You'll never make a hand of it with that," objected the other.

"If you won't help me, you cowardly shirk," screamed Morris, "you can go to the devil!"

"It's the childishest folly," said John, "but no man shall call me a coward," and he began to help his brother grudgingly.

The soil was sandy and light, but matted with the roots of the surrounding firs. Gorse tore their hands; and as they baled the sand from the grave, it was often discoloured with their blood. An hour passed of unremitting energy upon the part of Morris, of lukewarm help on that of John; and still the trench was barely nine inches in depth. Into this the body was rudely flung; sand was piled upon it, and then more sand must be dug, and gorse had to be cut to pile on that; and still from one end of the sordid mound a pair of feet projected and caught the light upon their patent-leather toes. But by this time the nerves of both were shaken; even Morris had enough of his grisly task; and they skulked off like animals into the thickest of the neighbouring covert.

"It's the best that we can do," said Morris sitting down.

"And now," said John, "perhaps you'll have the politeness to tell me what it's all about."

"Upon my word," cried Morris, "if you do

not understand for yourself, I almost despair of telling you."

"Oh, of course it's some rot about the tontine," returned the other. "But it's the merest nonsense. We've lost it, and there's an end."

"I tell you," said Morris, "Uncle Masterman is dead. I know it, there's a voice here that tells me so."

"Well, and so is Uncle Joseph," said John.

"He's not dead unless I choose," returned Morris.

"And come to that," cried John, "if you're right, and Uncle Masterman's been dead ever so long, all we have to do is to tell the truth and expose Michael."

"You seem to think Michael is a fool," sneered Morris. "Can't you understand he's been preparing this fraud for years? He has the whole thing ready: the nurse, the doctor, the undertaker, all bought, the certificate all ready but the date! Let him get wind of this business and you mark my words, Uncle Masterman will die in two days and be buried in a week. But see here, Johnny; what Michael can do, I can do. If he plays a game of bluff, so can I. If his father is to live for ever, by God, so shall my uncle!"

"It's illegal, ain't it?" said John.

"A man must have *some* moral courage," replied Morris with dignity.

"And then suppose you're wrong? suppose Uncle Masterman's alive and kicking?"

"Well, even then," responded the plotter, "we are no worse than we were before; in fact, we're better. Uncle Masterman must die some day; as long as Uncle Joseph was alive, he might have died any day; but we're out of all that trouble now: there's no sort of limit to the game that I propose—it can be kept up till Kingdom Come."

"If I could only see how you meant to set about it!" sighed John. "But you know, Morris, you always were such a bungler."

"I'd like to know what I ever bungled," cried Morris; "I have the best collection of signet rings in London."

"Well, you know, there's the leather business," suggested the other. "That's considered rather a hash."

It was a mark of singular self-control in Morris that he suffered this to pass unchallenged and even unresented.

"About the business in hand," said he, "once we can get him up to Bloomsbury, there's no sort of trouble. We bury him in the cellar, which seems made for it; and then all I have to do is to start out and find a venal doctor."

"Why can't we leave him where he is?" asked John.

"Because we know nothing about the country," retorted Morris. "This wood may be a regular lovers' walk. Turn your mind to the real difficulty. How are we to get him up to Bloomsbury?"

Various schemes were mooted and rejected. The railway station at Browndean was of course out of the question; for it would now be a centre of curiosity and gossip, and (of all things) they would be least able to despatch a dead body without remark. John feebly proposed getting an ale-cask and sending it as beer, but the objections to this course were so overwhelming that Morris scorned to answer. The purchase of a packing-case seemed equally hopeless; for why should two gentlemen without baggage of any kind require a packing-case? They would be more likely to require clean linen.

"We are working on wrong lines," cried Morris at last. "The thing must be gone about more carefully. Suppose, now," he added, excitedly, speaking by fits and starts as if he were thinking aloud, "suppose we rent a cottage by the month: a householder can buy a packing-case without remark. Then suppose we clear the people out to-day, get the packing-case to-night, and to-morrow I hire a carriage—or a cart that we could drive ourselves—and take the box, or whatever we get, to Ringwood or Lyndhurst or somewhere, we could label it 'Specimens,' don't you see?—Johnny, I believe I've hit the nail at last."

"Well, it sounds more feasible," admitted John.

"Of course, we must take assumed names," continued Morris. "It would never do to keep

our own. What do you say to 'Masterman' itself? It sounds quiet and dignified."

"I will *not* take the name of Masterman," returned his brother; "you may, if you like. I shall call myself Vance—the Great Vance; positively the last six nights. There's some go in a name like that."

"Vance!" cried Morris. "Do you think we are playing a pantomime for our amusement? There was never anybody named Vance who wasn't a music-hall singer."

"That's the beauty of it," returned John, "it gives you some standing at once. You may call yourself Fortescue till all's blue, and nobody cares; but to be Vance gives a man a natural nobility."

"But there's lots of other theatrical names," cried Morris. "Leybourne, Irving, Brough, Toole——"

"Devil a one will I take," returned his brother, "I am going to have my little lark out of this as well as you."

"Very well," said Morris, who perceived that John was determined to carry his point, "I shall be Robert Vance."

"And I shall be George Vance," cried John, "the only original George Vance! Rally round the only original!"

Repairing as well as they were able the disorder of their clothes, Finsbury brothers returned to Browndean by a circuitous route in quest of

luncheon and a suitable cottage. It is not always easy to drop at a moment's notice on a furnished residence in a retired locality; but fortune presently introduced our adventurers to a deaf carpenter, a man rich in cottages of the required description, and unaffectedly eager to supply their wants. The second place they visited, standing, as it did, about a mile and a half from any neighbours, caused them to exchange a glance of hope. On a nearer view the place was not without depressing features. It stood in a marshy-looking hollow of a heath; tall trees obscured its windows; the thatch visibly rotted on the rafters; and the walls were stained with splashes of unwholesome green. The rooms were small, the ceilings low, the furniture merely nominal; a strange chill and a haunting smell of damp pervaded the kitchen; and the bedroom boasted only of one bed.

Morris with a view to cheapening the place, remarked on this defect.

"Well," returned the man, "if you can't sleep two abed, you'd better take a villa residence."

"And then," pursued Morris, "there's no water; how do you get your water?"

"We fill *that* from the spring," replied the carpenter, pointing to a big barrel that stood beside the door. "The spring ain't so *very* far off, after all, and it's easy brought in buckets. There's a bucket there."

Morris nudged his brother as they examined the water-butt. It was new, and very solidly constructed for its office. If anything had been wanting to decide them, this eminently practicable barrel would have turned the scale. A bargain was promptly struck, the month's rent was paid upon the nail, and about an hour later Finsbury brothers might have been observed returning to the blighted cottage, having along with them the key, which was the symbol of their tenancy, a spirit-lamp, with which they fondly told themselves they would be able to cook, a pork-pie of suitable dimensions, and a quart of the worst whiskey in Hampshire. Nor was this all they had effected; already (under the plea that they were landscape-painters) they had hired for dawn on the morrow a light but solid two-wheeled cart; so that, when they entered in their new character, they were able to tell themselves that the back of the business was already broken.

John proceeded to get tea; while Morris, foraging about the house, was presently delighted by discovering the lid of the water-butt upon the kitchen shelf. Here, then, was the packing-case complete; in the absence of straw, the blankets (which he himself, at least, had not the smallest intention of using for their present purpose) would exactly take the place of packing; and Morris, as the difficulties began to vanish from his path, rose almost to the brink of exulta-

tion. There was, however, one difficulty not yet faced, one upon which his whole scheme depended. Would John consent to remain alone in the cottage? He had not yet dared to put the question.

It was with high good-humour that the pair sat down to the deal table, and proceeded to fall-to on the pork-pie. Morris retailed the discovery of the lid, and the Great Vance was pleased to applaud by beating on the table with his fork in true music-hall style.

"That's the dodge," he cried. "I always said a water-butt was what you wanted for this business."

"Of course," said Morris, thinking this a favourable opportunity to prepare his brother, "of course you must stay on in this place till I give the word; I'll give out that uncle is resting in the New Forest. It would not do for both of us to appear in London; we could never conceal the absence of the old man."

John's jaw dropped.

"Oh, come!" he cried. "You can stay in this hole yourself. I won't."

The colour came into Morris's cheeks. He saw that he must win his brother at any cost.

"You must please remember, Johnny," he said, "the amount of the tontine. If I succeed, we shall have each fifty thousand to place to our bank account; ay, and nearer sixty."

"But if you fail," returned John, "what then?

What'll be the colour of our bank account in that case?"

"I will pay all expenses," said Morris, with an inward struggle; "you shall lose nothing."

"Well," said John, with a laugh, "if the ex-s are yours, and half profits mine, I don't mind remaining here for a couple of days."

"A couple of days!" cried Morris, who was beginning to get angry and controlled himself with difficulty. "Why, you would do more to win five pounds on a horse-race!"

"Perhaps I would," returned the Great Vance; "it's the artistic temperament."

"This is monstrous!" burst out Morris. "I take all risks; I pay all expenses; I divide profits; and you won't take the slightest pains to help me. It's not decent; it's not honest; it's not even kind."

"But suppose," objected John, who was considerably impressed by his brother's vehemence, "suppose that Uncle Masterman is alive after all, and lives ten years longer; must I rot here all that time?"

"Of course not," responded Morris, in a more conciliatory tone. "I only ask a month at the outside; and if Uncle Masterman is not dead by that time you can go abroad."

"Go abroad?" repeated John, eagerly. "Why shouldn't I go at once? Tell 'em that Joseph and I are seeing life in Paris."

"Nonsense," said Morris.

"Well, but look here," said John; "it's this

house, it's such a pig-sty, it's so dreary and damp. You said yourself that it was damp."

"Only to the carpenter," Morris distinguished, "and that was to reduce the rent. But really you know, now we're in it, I've seen worse."

"And what am I to do?" complained the victim. "How can I entertain a friend?"

"My dear Johnny, if you don't think the tontine worth a little trouble, say so; and I'll give the business up."

"You're dead certain of the figures, I suppose?" asked John. "Well"—with a deep sigh —"send me the *Pink Un* and all the comic papers regularly. I'll face the music."

As afternoon drew on, the cottage breathed more thrillingly of its native marsh; a creeping chill inhabited its chambers; the fire smoked; and a shower of rain, coming up from the Channel on a slant of wind, tingled on the window-panes. At intervals, when the gloom deepened towards despair, Morris would produce the whiskey bottle, and at first John welcomed the diversion—not for long. It has been said this spirit was the worst in Hampshire; only those acquainted with the county can appreciate the force of that superlative; and at length even the Great Vance (who was no connoisseur) waved the decoction from his lips. The approach of dusk, feebly combated with a single tallow candle, added a touch of tragedy; and John suddenly stopped whistling through his fingers—an art

to the practice of which he had been reduced—and bitterly lamented his concessions.

"I can't stay here a month," he cried. "No one could. The thing's nonsense, Morris. The parties that lived in the Bastille would rise against a place like this."

With an admirable affectation of indifference, Morris proposed a game of pitch-and-toss. To what will not the diplomatist condescend! It was John's favourite game; indeed, his only game—he had found all the rest too intellectual—and he played it with equal skill and good fortune. To Morris himself, on the other hand, the whole business was detestable; he was a bad pitcher, he had no luck in tossing, and he was one who suffered torments when he lost. But John was in a dangerous humour, and his brother was prepared for any sacrifice.

By seven o'clock, Morris, with incredible agony, had lost a couple of half-crowns. Even with the tontine before his eyes, this was as much as he could bear; and remarking that he would take his revenge some other time, he proposed a bit of supper and a grog.

Before they had made an end of this refreshment, it was time to be at work. A bucket of water for present necessities was withdrawn from the water-butt, which was then emptied and rolled before the kitchen fire to dry; and the two brothers set forth on their adventure under a starless heaven.

CHAPTER III

THE LECTURER AT LARGE

WHETHER mankind is really partial to happiness is an open question. Not a month passes by but some cherished son runs off into the merchant service, or some valued husband decamps to Texas with a lady help; clergymen have fled from their parishioners; and even judges have been known to retire. To an open mind, it will appear (upon the whole) less strange that Joseph Finsbury should have been led to entertain ideas of escape. His lot (I think we may say) was not a happy one. My friend, Mr. Morris, with whom I travel up twice or thrice a week from Snaresbrook Park, is certainly a gentleman whom I esteem; but he was scarce a model nephew. As for John, he is of course an excellent fellow; but if he was the only link that bound one to a home, I think the most of us would vote for foreign travel. In the case of Joseph, John (if he were a link at all) was not the only one; endearing bonds had long enchained the old gentleman to Bloomsbury; and by these expressions I do not in the least refer to

Julia Hazeltine (of whom, however, he was fond enough), but to that collection of manuscript note-books in which his life lay buried. That he should ever have made up his mind to separate himself from these collections, and go forth upon the world with no other resources than his memory supplied, is a circumstance highly pathetic in itself, and but little creditable to the wisdom of his nephews.

The design, or at least the temptation, was already some months old; and when a bill for eight hundred pounds, payable to himself, was suddenly placed in Joseph's hand, it brought matters to an issue. He retained that bill, which, to one of his frugality, meant wealth; and he promised himself to disappear among the crowds at Waterloo, or (if that should prove impossible) to slink out of the house in the course of the evening and melt like a dream into the millions of London. By a peculiar interposition of providence and railway mismanagement he had not so long to wait.

He was one of the first to come to himself and scramble to his feet after the Browndean catastrophe, and he had no sooner remarked his prostrate nephews than he understood his opportunity and fled. A man of upward of seventy, who has just met with a railway accident, and who is cumbered besides with the full uniform of Sir Faraday Bond, is not very likely to flee far, but the wood was close at hand and offered the fugi-

tive at least a temporary covert. Hither, then, the old gentleman skipped with extraordinary expedition, and, being somewhat winded and a good deal shaken, here he lay down in a convenient grove and was presently overwhelmed by slumber. The way of fate is often highly entertaining to the looker-on, and it is certainly a pleasant circumstance, that while Morris and John were delving in the sand to conceal the body of a total stranger, their uncle lay in dreamless sleep a few hundred yards deeper in the wood.

He was awakened by the jolly note of a bugle from the neighbouring high-road, where a char-à-banc was bowling by with some belated tourists. The sound cheered his old heart, it directed his steps into the bargain, and soon he was on the highway, looking east and west from under his vizor, and doubtfully revolving what he ought to do. A deliberate sound of wheels arose in the distance, and then a cart was seen approaching, well filled with parcels, driven by a good-natured looking man on a double bench, and displaying on a board the legend, "I. Chandler, carrier." In the infamously prosaic mind of Mr. Finsbury, certain streaks of poetry survived and were still efficient; they had carried him to Asia Minor as a giddy youth of forty, and now, in the first hours of his recovered freedom, they suggested to him the idea of continuing his flight in Mr. Chandler's cart. It would be

cheap; properly broached, it might even cost nothing, and, after years of mittens and hygienic flannel, his heart leaped out to meet the notion of exposure.

Mr. Chandler was perhaps a little puzzled to find so old a gentleman, so strangely clothed, and begging for a lift on so retired a roadside. But he was a good-natured man, glad to do a service, and so he took the stranger up; and he had his own idea of civility, and so he asked no questions. Silence, in fact, was quite good enough for Mr. Chandler; but the cart had scarcely begun to move forward ere he found himself involved in a one-sided conversation.

"I can see," began Mr. Finsbury, "by the mixture of parcels and boxes that are contained in your cart, each marked with its individual label, and by the good Flemish mare you drive, that you occupy the post of carrier in that great English system of transport which, with all its defects, is the pride of our country."

"Yes, sir," returned Mr. Chandler vaguely, for he hardly knew what to reply, "them parcels posts has done us carriers a world of harm."

"I am not a prejudiced man," continued Joseph Finsbury. "As a young man I travelled much. Nothing was too small or too obscure for me to acquire. At sea I studied seamanship, learned the complicated knots employed by mariners, and acquired the technical terms. At Naples, I would learn the art of making maca-

roni; at Nice, the principles of making candied fruit. I never went to the opera without first buying the book of the piece, and making myself acquainted with the principal airs by picking them out on the piano with one finger."

"You must have seen a deal, sir," remarked the carrier, touching up his horse; "I wish I could have had your advantages."

"Do you know how often the word whip occurs in the Old Testament?" continued the old gentleman. "One hundred and (if I remember exactly) forty-seven times."

"Do it indeed, sir?" said Mr. Chandler. "I never should have thought it."

"The Bible contains three million five hundred and one thousand two hundred and forty-nine letters. Of verses I believe there are upward of eighteen thousand. There have been many editions of the Bible; Wiclif was the first to introduce it into England about the year 1300. The 'Paragraph Bible,' as it is called, is a well-known edition, and is so called because it is divided into paragraphs. The 'Breeches Bible' is another well-known instance, and gets its name either because it was printed by one Breeches, or because the place of publication bore that name."

The carrier remarked dryly that he thought that was only natural, and turned his attention to the more congenial task of passing a cart of hay; it was a matter of some difficulty, for the road was narrow and there was a ditch on either hand.

"I perceive," began Mr. Finsbury, when they had successfully passed the cart, "that you hold your reins with one hand; you should employ two."

"Well, I like that!" cried the carrier, contemptuously. "Why?"

"You do not understand," continued Mr. Finsbury. "What I tell you is a scientific fact, and reposes on the theory of the lever, a branch of mechanics. There are some very interesting little shilling books upon the field of study, which I should think a man in your station would take a pleasure to read. But I am afraid you have not cultivated the art of observation; at least we have now driven together for some time, and I cannot remember that you have contributed a single fact. This is a very false principle, my good man. For instance, I do not know if you observed that (as you passed the hay-cart man) you took your left?"

"Of course I did," cried the carrier, who was now getting belligerent; "he'd have the law on me if I hadn't."

"In France, now," resumed the old man, "and also, I believe, in the United States of America, you would have taken the right."

"I would not," cried Mr. Chandler, indignantly. "I would have taken the left."

"I observe," again continued Mr. Finsbury, scorning to reply, "that you mend the dilapidated parts of your harness with string. I have

always protested against this carelessness and slovenliness of the English poor. In an essay that I once read before an appreciative audience——"

"It ain't string," said the carrier sullenly, "it's packthread."

"I have always protested," resumed the old man, "that in their private and domestic life, as well as in their labouring career, the lower classes of this country are improvident, thriftless, and extravagant. A stitch in time——"

"Who the devil *are* the lower classes?" cried the carrier. "You are the lower classes yourself! If I thought you were a blooming aristocrat I shouldn't have given you a lift."

The words were uttered with undisguised ill-feeling; it was plain the pair were not congenial, and further conversation, even to one of Mr. Finsbury's pathetic loquacity, was out of the question. With an angry gesture he pulled down the brim of the forage-cap over his eyes, and, producing a note-book and a blue pencil from one of his innermost pockets, soon became absorbed in calculations.

On his part the carrier fell to whistling with fresh zest; and if (now and again) he glanced at the companion of his drive, it was with mingled feelings of triumph and alarm—triumph because he had succeeded in arresting that prodigy of speech, and alarm lest (by any accident) it should begin again. Even the shower, which

presently overtook and passed them, was endured by both in silence; and it was still in silence that they drove at length into Southampton.

Dusk had fallen; the shop windows glimmered forth into the streets of the old seaport; in private houses lights were kindled for the evening meal; and Mr. Finsbury began to think complacently of his night's lodging. He put his papers by, cleared his throat, and looked doubtfully at Mr. Chandler.

"Will you be civil enough," said he, "to recommend me to an inn?"

Mr. Chandler pondered for a moment.

"Well," he said at last, "I wonder how about the 'Tregonwell Arms.'"

"The 'Tregonwell Arms' will do very well," returned the old man, "if it's clean and cheap, and the people civil."

"I wasn't thinking so much of you," returned Mr. Chandler, thoughtfully. "I was thinking of my friend Watts as keeps the 'ouse; he's a friend of mine, you see, and he helped me through my trouble last year. And I was thinking, would it be fair-like on Watts to saddle him with an old party like you, who might be the death of him with general information. Would it be fair to the 'ouse?" inquired Mr. Chandler, with an air of candid appeal.

"Mark me," cried the old gentleman with spirit. "It was kind in you to bring me here for nothing, but it gives you no right to address me

in such terms. Here's a shilling for your trouble; and, if you do not choose to set me down at the 'Tregonwell Arms,' I can find it for myself."

Chandler was surprised and a little startled; muttering something apologetic, he returned the shilling, drove in silence through several intricate lanes and small streets, drew up at length before the bright windows of an inn, and called loudly for "Mr. Watts."

"Is that you, Jem?" cried a hearty voice from the stableyard. "Come in and warm yourself."

"I only stopped here," Mr. Chandler explained, "to let down an old gent what wants food and lodging. Mind, I warn you agin him; he's worse nor a temperance lecturer."

Mr. Finsbury dismounted with difficulty, for he was cramped with his long drive, and the shaking he had received in the accident. The friendly Mr. Watts, in spite of the carter's scarcely agreeable introduction, treated the old gentleman with the utmost courtesy, and led him into the back parlour, where there was a big fire burning in the grate. Presently a table was spread in the same room, and he was invited to seat himself before a stewed fowl—somewhat the worse for having seen service before—and a big pewter mug of ale from the tap.

He rose from supper a giant refreshed; and, changing his seat to be one nearer the fire, began to examine the other guests with an eye to the delights of oratory. There were near a dozen

present, all men, and (as Joseph exulted to perceive) all workingmen. Often already had he seen cause to bless that appetite for disconnected fact and rotatory argument which is so marked a character of the mechanic. But even an audience of workingmen has to be courted, and there was no man more deeply versed in the necessary arts than Joseph Finsbury. He placed his glasses on his nose, drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, and spread them before him on a table. He crumpled them, he smoothed them out; now he skimmed them over, apparently well pleased with their contents; now, with tapping pencil and contracted brows, he seemed maturely to consider some particular statement. A stealthy glance about the room assured him of the success of his manœuvres; all eyes were turned on the performer, mouths were open, pipes hung suspended; the birds were charmed. At the same moment the entrance of Mr. Watts afforded him an opportunity.

"I observe," said he, addressing the landlord, but taking at the same time the whole room into his confidence with an encouraging look, "I observe that some of these gentlemen are looking with curiosity in my direction; and certainly it is unusual to see anyone immersed in literary and scientific labours in the public apartment of an inn. I have here some calculations I made this morning upon the cost of living in this and other countries—a subject, I need scarcely say,

highly interesting to the working classes. I have calculated a scale of living for incomes of eighty, one hundred and sixty, two hundred, and two hundred and forty pounds a year. I must confess that the income of eighty pounds has somewhat baffled me, and the others are not so exact as I could wish; for the price of washing varies largely in foreign countries, and the different cokes, coals, and firewoods fluctuate surprisingly. I will read my researches, and I hope you won't scruple to point out to me any little errors that I may have committed either from oversight or ignorance. I will begin, gentlemen, with the income of eighty pounds a year."

Whereupon the old gentleman, with less compassion than he would have had for brute beasts, delivered himself of all his tedious calculations. As he occasionally gave ten versions of a single income, placing the imaginary person in London, Paris, Bagdad, Spitzbergen, Bassorah, Heligoland, the Scilly Islands, Brighton, Cincinnati, and Nijni-Novgorod, with an appropriate outfit for each locality, it is no wonder that his hearers look back on that evening as the most tiresome they ever spent.

Long before Mr. Finsbury had reached Nijni-Novgorod with the income of one hundred and sixty pounds, the company had dwindled and faded away to a few old topers and the bored but affable Watts. There was a constant stream of customers from the outer world, but so soon

as they were served they drank their liquor quickly, and departed with the utmost celerity for the next public-house.

By the time the young man with two hundred a year was vegetating in the Scilly Islands, Mr. Watts was left alone with the economist; and that imaginary person had scarce commenced life at Brighton before the last of his pursuers desisted from the chase.

Mr. Finsbury slept soundly after the manifold fatigues of the day. He rose late, and, after a good breakfast, ordered the bill. Then it was that he made a discovery which has been made by many others, both before and since: that it is one thing to order your bill, and another to discharge it. The items were moderate and (what does not always follow) the total small; but after the most sedulous review of all his pockets, one and ninepence-halfpenny appeared to be the total of the old gentleman's available assets.

He asked to see Mr. Watts.

"Here is a bill on London for eight hundred pounds," said Mr. Finsbury, as that worthy appeared. "I am afraid, unless you choose to discount it yourself, it may detain me a day or two till I can get it cashed."

Mr. Watts looked at the bill, turned it over, and dogs-eared it with his fingers. "It will keep you a day or two?" he said, repeating the old man's words. "You have no other money with you?"

"Some trifling change," responded Joseph. "Nothing to speak of."

"Then you can send it me; I should be pleased to trust you."

"To tell the truth," answered the old gentleman, "I am more than half inclined to stay; I am in need of funds."

"If a loan of ten shillings would help you, it is at your service," responded Watts, with eagerness.

"No, I think I would rather stay," said the old man, "and get my bill discounted."

"You shall not stay in my house," cried Mr. Watts. "This is the last time you shall have a bed at the 'Tregonwell Arms.'"

"I insist upon remaining," replied Mr. Finsbury, with spirit; "I remain by Act of Parliament; turn me out if you dare."

"Then pay your bill," said Mr. Watts.

"Take that," cried the old man, tossing him the negotiable bill.

"It is not legal tender," replied Mr. Watts. "You must leave my house at once."

"You cannot appreciate the contempt I feel for you, Mr. Watts," said the old gentleman, resigning himself to circumstances. "But you shall feel it in one way; I refuse to pay my bill."

"I don't care for your bill," responded Mr. Watts. "What I want is your absence."

"That you shall have!" said the old gentleman, and taking up his forage-cap as he spoke,

he crammed it on his head. "Perhaps you are too insolent," he added, "to inform me of the time of the next London train?"

"It leaves in three quarters of an hour," returned the inn-keeper, with alacrity. "You can easily catch it."

Joseph's position was one of considerable weakness. On the one hand, it would have been well to avoid the direct line of railway, since it was there he might expect his nephews to lie in wait for his recapture; on the other, it was highly desirable, it was even strictly needful, to get the bill discounted ere it should be stopped. To London, therefore, he decided to proceed on the first train; and there remained but one point to be considered, how to pay his fare.

Joseph's nails were never clean, he ate almost entirely with his knife. I doubt if you could say he had the manners of a gentleman; but he had better than that, a touch of genuine dignity. Was it from his stay in Asia Minor? Was it from a strain in the Finsbury blood sometimes alluded to by customers? At least, when he presented himself before the station-master, his salaam was truly Oriental, palm-trees appeared to crowd about the little office, and the simoom or the bulbul—— but I leave this image to persons better acquainted with the East. His appearance, besides, was highly in his favour; the uniform of Sir Faraday, however inconvenient and conspicuous, was, at least, a costume in which no

swindler could have hoped to prosper; and the exhibition of a valuable watch and a bill for eight hundred pounds completed what deportment had begun. A quarter of an hour later, when the train came up, Mr. Finsbury was introduced to the guard and installed in a first-class compartment, the station-master smilingly assuming all responsibility.

As the old gentleman sat waiting the moment of departure, he was the witness of an incident strangely connected with the fortunes of his house. A packing-case of cyclopean bulk was borne along the platform by some dozen of tottering porters, and ultimately, to the delight of a considerable crowd, hoisted on board the van. It is often the cheering task of the historian to direct attention to the designs and (if it may be reverently said) the artifices of Providence. In the luggage van, as Joseph was borne out of the station of Southampton East upon his way to London, the egg of this romance lay (so to speak) unhatched. The huge packing-case was directed "to lie at Waterloo till called for," and addressed to one "William Dent Pitman"; and the very next article, a goodly barrel jammed into the corner of the van, bore the superscription "M. Finsbury, 16 John Street, Bloomsbury. Carriage paid."

In this juxtaposition, the train of powder was prepared; and there was now wanting only an idle hand to fire it off.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAGISTRATE IN THE LUGGAGE VAN

THE city of Winchester is famed for a cathedral, a bishop—but he was unfortunately killed some years ago while riding—a public school, a considerable assortment of the military, and the deliberate passage of the trains on the London and South-Western line. These and many similar associations would have doubtless crowded on the mind of Joseph Finsbury; but his spirit had at that time flitted from the railway compartment to a heaven of populous lecture-halls and endless oratory. His body, in the meanwhile, lay doubled on the cushions, the forage-cap rakishly tilted back after the fashion of those that lie in wait for nursery-maids, the poor old face quiescent, one arm clutching to his heart *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper.*

To him, thus unconscious, enter and exeunt again a pair of voyagers. These two had saved the train and no more. A tandem urged to its last speed, an act of something closely bordering on brigandage at the ticket office, and a spasm

of running, had brought them on the platform just as the engine uttered its departing snort. There was but one carriage easily within their reach; and they had sprung into it, and the leader and elder already had his feet upon the floor, when he observed Mr. Finsbury.

"Good God!" he cried, "Uncle Joseph! This'll never do."

And he backed out, almost upsetting his companion, and once more closed the door upon the sleeping patriarch.

The next moment the pair had jumped into the baggage van.

"What's the row about your Uncle Joseph?" inquired the younger traveller, mopping his brow. "Does he object to smoking?"

"I don't know that there's anything the row with him," returned the other. "He's by no means the first comer, my Uncle Joseph, I can tell you! Very respectable old gentleman; interested in leather; been to Asia Minor; no family, no assets—and a tongue, my dear Wickham, sharper than a serpent's tooth."

"Cantankerous old party, eh?" suggested Wickham.

"Not in the least," cried the other; "only a man with a solid talent for being a bore; rather cheery, I daresay, on a desert island, but on a railway journey insupportable. You should hear him on Tonti, the ass that started tontines. He's incredible on Tonti."

"By Jove!" cried Wickham, "then you're one of these Finsbury tontine fellows. I hadn't a guess of that."

"Ah!" said the other, "do you know that old boy in the carriage is worth a hundred thousand pounds to me? There he was asleep, and nobody there but you! But I spared him, because I'm a Conservative in politics."

Mr. Wickham, pleased to be in a luggage van, was flitting to and fro like a gentlemanly butterfly.

"By Jingo!" he cried, "here's something for you! M. Finsbury, 16 John Street, Bloomsbury, London. M. stands for Michael, you sly dog; you keep two establishments, do you?"

"Oh, that's Morris," responded Michael from the other end of the van, where he had found a comfortable seat upon some sacks. "He's a little cousin of mine. I like him myself, because he's afraid of me. He's one of the ornaments of Bloomsbury, and has a collection of some kind —birds' eggs or something—that's supposed to be curious. I bet it's nothing to my clients!"

"What a lark it would be to play billy with the labels!" chuckled Mr. Wickham. "By George, here's a tack-hammer! We might send all these things skipping about the premises like what's-his-name!"

At this moment the guard, surprised by the sound of voices, opened the door of his little cabin.

"You had best step in here, gentlemen," said he, when he had heard their story.

"Won't you come, Wickham?" asked Michael.

"Catch me—I want to travel in a van," replied the youth.

And so the door of communication was closed; and for the rest of the run Mr. Wickham was left alone over his diversions on the one side, and on the other Michael and the guard were closeted together in familiar talk.

"I can get you a compartment here, sir," observed the official, as the train began to slacken speed before Bishopstoke station. "You had best get out at my door, and I can bring your friend."

Mr. Wickham, whom we left (as the reader has shrewdly suspected) beginning to "play billy" with the labels in the van, was a young gentleman of much wealth, a pleasing but sandy exterior, and a highly vacant mind. Not many months before, he had contrived to get himself blackmailed by the family of a Wallachian Hospodar, resident for political reasons in the gay city of Paris. A common friend (to whom he had confided his distress) recommended him to Michael; and the lawyer was no sooner in possession of the facts than he instantly assumed the offensive, fell on the flank of the Wallachian forces, and, in the inside of three days, had the satisfaction to behold them routed and fleeing for the Danube. It is no business of ours to

follow them on this retreat, over which the police were so obliging as to preside paternally. Thus relieved from what he loved to refer to as the Bulgarian Atrocity, Mr. Wickham returned to London with the most unbounded and embarrassing gratitude and admiration for his saviour. These sentiments were not repaid either in kind or degree; indeed, Michael was a trifle ashamed of his new client's friendship; it had taken many invitations to get him to Winchester and Wickham Manor; but he had gone at last, and was now returning. It has been remarked by some judicious thinker (possibly J. F. Smith) that Providence despises to employ no instrument, however humble; and it is now plain to the dullest that both Mr. Wickham and the Wallachian Hospodar were liquid lead and wedges in the hand of destiny.

Smitten with the desire to shine in Michael's eyes and show himself a person of original humour and resources, the young gentleman (who was a magistrate, more by token, in his native county) was no sooner alone in the van than he fell upon the labels with all the zeal of a reformer; and when he rejoined the lawyer at Bishopstoke, his face was flushed with his exertions, and his cigar, which he had suffered to go out, was almost bitten in two.

"By George, but this has been a lark!" he cried. "I've sent the wrong thing to everybody in England. These cousins of yours have a

packing-case as big as a house. I've muddled the whole business up to that extent, Finsbury, that if it were to get out, it's my belief we should be lynched."

It was useless to be serious with Mr. Wickham. "Take care," said Michael. "I am getting tired of your perpetual scrapes; my reputation is beginning to suffer."

"Your reputation will be all gone before you finish with me," replied his companion, with a grin. "Clap it in the bill, my boy. 'For total loss of reputation, six and eightpence.' But," continued Mr. Wickham, with more seriousness, "could I be bowled out of the Commission for this little jest? I know it's small, but I like to be a J. P. Speaking as a professional man, do you think there's any risk?"

"What does it matter?" responded Michael, "they'll chuck you out sooner or later. Somehow you don't give the effect of being a good magistrate."

"I only wish I was a solicitor," retorted his companion, "instead of a poor devil of a country gentleman. Suppose we start one of those tontine affairs ourselves; I to pay five hundred a year, and you to guarantee me against every misfortune except illness or marriage."

"It strikes me," remarked the lawyer with a meditative laugh, as he lighted a cigar, "it strikes me that you must be a cursed nuisance in this world of ours."

"Do you really think so, Finsbury?" responded the magistrate, leaning back in his cushions, delighted with the compliment. "Yes, I suppose I am a nuisance. But, mind you, I have a stake in the country: don't forget that, dear boy."

CHAPTER V

MR. GIDEON FORSYTH AND THE GIGANTIC BOX

IT has been mentioned that at Bournemouth Julia sometimes made acquaintances; it is true she had but a glimpse of them before the doors of John Street closed again upon its captives, but the glimpse was sometimes exhilarating, and the consequent regret was tempered with hope. Among those whom she had thus met a year before was a young barrister of the name of Gideon Forsyth.

About three o'clock of the eventful day when the magistrate tampered with the labels, a somewhat moody and distempered ramble had carried Mr. Forsyth to the corner of John Street; and about the same moment Miss Hazeltine was called to the door of No. 16 by a thundering double knock.

Mr. Gideon Forsyth was a happy enough young man; he would have been happier if he had had more money and less uncle. One hundred and twenty pounds a year was all his store;

but his uncle, Mr. Edward Hugh Bloomfield, supplemented this with a handsome allowance and a great deal of advice, couched in language that would probably have been judged intemperate on board a pirate ship. Mr. Bloomfield was indeed a figure quite peculiar to the days of Mr. Gladstone; what we may call (for the lack of an accepted expression) a Squirradical. Having acquired years without experience, he carried into the Radical side of politics those noisy, after-dinner-table passions, which we are more accustomed to connect with Toryism in its severe and senile aspects. To the opinions of Mr. Bradlaugh, in fact, he added the temper and the sympathies of that extinct animal, the Squire; he admired pugilism, he carried a formidable oaken staff, he was a reverent churchman, and it was hard to know which would have more volcanically stirred his choler—a person who should have defended the established church, or one who should have neglected to attend its celebrations. He had besides some levelling catch-words, justly dreaded in the family circle; and when he could not go so far as to declare a step un-English, he might still (and with hardly less effect) denounce it as unpractical. It was under the ban of this lesser excommunication that Gideon had fallen. His views on the study of law had been pronounced unpractical; and it had been intimated to him, in a vociferous interview punctuated with the oaken staff, that he must either take a

new start and get a brief or two, or prepare to live on his own money.

No wonder if Gideon was moody. He had not the slightest wish to modify his present habits; but he would not stand on that, since the recall of Mr. Bloomfield's allowance would revolutionise them still more radically. He had not the least desire to acquaint himself with law; he had looked into it already, and it seemed not to repay attention; but upon this also he was ready to give way. In fact, he would go as far as he could to meet the views of his uncle, the Squirradical. But there was one part of the programme that appeared independent of his will. How to get a brief? there was the question. And there was another and a worse. Suppose he got one, should he prove the better man?

Suddenly he found his way barred by a crowd. A garishly illuminated van was backed against the kerb; from its open stern, half resting on the street, half supported by some glistening athletes, the end of the largest packing-case in the county of Middlesex might have been seen protruding; while, on the steps of the house, the burly person of the driver and the slim figure of a young girl stood as upon a stage, disputing.

"It is not for us," the girl was saying. "I beg you to take it away; it couldn't get into the house, even if you managed to get it out of the van."

"I shall leave it on the pavement, then, and

M. Finsbury can arrange with the Vestry as he likes," said the van-man.

"But I am not M. Finsbury," expostulated the girl.

"It doesn't matter who you are," said the van-man.

"You must allow me to help you, Miss Hazeltine," said Gideon, putting out his hand.

Julia gave a little cry of pleasure. "Oh, Mr. Forsyth," she cried, "I am so glad to see you; we must get this horrid thing, which can only have come here by mistake, into the house. The man says we'll have to take off the door, or knock two of our windows into one, or be fined by the Vestry or Custom House or something for leaving our parcels on the pavement."

The men by this time had successfully removed the box from the van, had plumped it down on the pavement, and now stood leaning against it, or gazing at the door of No. 16, in visible physical distress and mental embarrassment. The windows of the whole street had filled, as if by magic, with interested and entertained spectators.

With as thoughtful and scientific an expression as he could assume, Gideon measured the doorway with his cane, while Julia entered his observations in a drawing-book. He then measured the box, and, upon comparing his data, found that there was just enough space for it to enter. Next, throwing off his coat and waistcoat, he

assisted the men to take the door from its hinges. And lastly, all by-standers being pressed into the service, the packing-case mounted the steps upon some fifteen pairs of wavering legs—scraped, loudly grinding, through the doorway—and was deposited at length, with a formidable convulsion, in the far end of the lobby, which it almost blocked. The artisans of this victory smiled upon each other as the dust subsided. It was true they had smashed a bust of Apollo and ploughed the wall into deep ruts; but, at least, they were no longer one of the public spectacles of London.

"Well, sir," said the van-man, "I never see such a job."

Gideon eloquently expressed his concurrence in this sentiment by pressing a couple of sovereigns in the man's hand.

"Make it three, sir, and I'll stand Sam to everybody here!" cried the latter; and, this having been done, the whole body of volunteer porters swarmed into the van, which drove off in the direction of the nearest reliable public-house. Gideon closed the door on their departure, and turned to Julia; their eyes met; the most uncontrollable mirth seized upon them both, and they made the house ring with their laughter. Then curiosity awoke in Julia's mind, and she went and examined the box, and more especially the label.

"This is the strangest thing that ever hap-

pened," she said, with another burst of laughter. "It is certainly Morris's handwriting, and I had a letter from him only this morning, telling me to expect a barrel. Is there a barrel coming too, do you think, Mr. Forsyth?"

"Statuary with Care, Fragile," read Gideon aloud from the painted warning on the box. "Then you were told nothing about this?"

"No," responded Julia. "Oh, Mr. Forsyth, don't you think we might take a peep at it?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Gideon. "Just let me have a hammer."

"Come down, and I'll show you where it is," cried Julia, "the shelf is too high for me to reach"; and, opening the door of the kitchen stair, she bade Gideon follow her. They found both a hammer and a chisel; but Gideon was surprised to see no sign of a servant. He also discovered that Miss Hazeltine had a very pretty little foot and ankle; and the discovery embarrassed him so much that he was glad to fall at once upon the packing-case.

He worked hard and earnestly, and dealt his blows with the precision of a blacksmith; Julia the while standing silently by his side and regarding rather the workman than the work. He was a handsome fellow, she told herself she had never seen such beautiful arms. And suddenly, as though he had overheard these thoughts, Gideon turned and smiled to her. She, too, smiled and coloured; and the double

change became her so prettily that Gideon forgot to turn away his eyes, and, swinging the hammer with a will, discharged a smashing blow on his own knuckles. With admirable presence of mind he crushed down an oath and substituted the harmless comment, "butter fingers!" But the pain was sharp, his nerve was shaken, and after an abortive trial he found he must desist from further operations.

In a moment Julia was off to the pantry, in a moment she was back again with a basin of water and a sponge, and had begun to bathe his wounded hand.

"I am dreadfully sorry," said Gideon, apologetically. "If I had had any manners I should have opened the box first, and smashed my hand afterward. It feels much better," he added. "I assure you it does."

"And now I think you are well enough to direct operations," said she. "Tell me what to do, and I'll be your workman."

"A very pretty workman," said Gideon, rather forgetting himself. She turned and looked at him, with a suspicion of a frown; and the indiscreet young man was glad to direct her attention to the packing-case. The bulk of the work had been accomplished; and presently Julia had burst through the last barrier and disclosed a zone of straw. In a moment they were kneeling side by side, engaged like hay-makers; the next they were rewarded with a glimpse of

something white and polished; and the next again, laid bare an unmistakable marble leg.

"He is surely a very athletic person," said Julia.

"I never saw anything like it," responded Gideon. "His muscles stand out like penny rolls."

Another leg was soon disclosed, and then what seemed to be a third. This resolved itself, however, into a knotted club resting upon a pedestal.

"It is a Hercules," cried Gideon; "I might have guessed that from his calf. I'm supposed to be rather partial to statuary, but when it comes to Hercules, the police should interfere. I should say," he added, glancing with disaffection at the swollen leg, "that this was about the biggest and the worst in Europe. What in heaven's name can have induced him to come here?"

"I suppose nobody else would have a gift of him," said Julia. "And for that matter, I think we could have done without the monster very well."

"Oh, don't say that," returned Gideon. "This has been one of the most amusing experiences of my life."

"I don't think you'll forget it very soon," said Julia. "Your hand will remind you."

"Well, I suppose I must be going," said Gideon, reluctantly.

"No," pleaded Julia. "Why should you? Stay and have tea with me."

"If I thought you really wished me to stay," said Gideon, looking at his hat, "of course I should only be too delighted."

"What a silly person you must take me for!" returned the girl. "Why, of course I do; and besides I want some cakes for tea, and I've nobody to send. Here is the latch-key."

Gideon put on his hat with alacrity, and casting one look at Miss Hazeltine and another at the legs of Hercules, threw open the door and departed on his errand.

He returned with a large bag of the choicest and most tempting of cakes and tartlets, and found Julia in the act of spreading a small tea-table in the lobby.

"The rooms are all in such a state," she cried, "that I thought we should be more cozy and comfortable in our own lobby, and under our own vine and statuary."

"Ever so much better," cried Gideon, delightedly.

"Oh, what adorable cream tarts!" said Julia, opening the bag, "and the dearest little cherry tartlets, with all the cherries spilled out into the cream!"

"Yes," said Gideon, concealing his dismay, "I knew they would mix beautifully; the woman behind the counter told me so."

"Now," said Julia, as they began their little

festival, "I am going to show you Morris's letter; read it aloud, please; perhaps there's something I have missed."

Gideon took the letter, and spreading it out on his knee, read as follows:

"DEAR JULIA: I write you from Browndean, where we are stopping over for a few days. Uncle was much shaken in that dreadful accident, of which, I daresay, you have seen the account. To-morrow I leave him here with John, and come up alone; but before that you will have received a barrel *containing specimens for a friend.* Do not open it on any account, but leave it in the lobby till I come.

"Yours in haste,

"M. FINSBURY.

"P. S.—Be sure and leave the barrel in the lobby."

"No," said Gideon, "there seems to be nothing about the monument," and he nodded, as he spoke, at the marble legs. "Miss Hazeltine," he continued, "would you mind me asking a few questions?"

"Certainly not," replied Julia; "and if you can make me understand why Morris has sent a statue of Hercules instead of a barrel containing specimens for a friend, I shall be grateful till my dying day. And what are specimens for a friend?"

"I haven't a guess," said Gideon. "Specimens are usually bits of stone, but rather smaller than our friend the monument. Still, that is not the point. Are you quite alone in this big house?"

"Yes, I am at present," returned Julia. "I came up before them to prepare the house, and get another servant. But I couldn't get one I liked."

"Then you are utterly alone," said Gideon in amazement. "Are you not afraid?"

"No," responded Julia, stoutly. "I don't see why I should be more afraid than you would be; I am weaker, of course, but when I found I must sleep alone in the house, I bought a revolver wonderfully cheap and made the man show me how to use it."

"And how do you use it?" demanded Gideon, much amused at her courage.

"Why," said she, with a smile, "you pull the little trigger thing on top, and then pointing it very low, for it springs up as you fire, you pull the underneath little trigger thing, and it goes off as well as if a man had done it."

"And how often have you used it?" asked Gideon.

"Oh, I have not used it yet," said the determined young lady; "but I know how, and that makes me wonderfully courageous, especially when I barricade my door with a chest of drawers."

"I'm awfully glad they are coming back soon," said Gideon. "This business strikes me as excessively unsafe; if it goes on much longer, I could provide you with a maiden aunt of mine, or my landlady if you preferred."

"Lend me an aunt!" cried Julia. "Oh, what generosity! I begin to think it must have been you that sent the Hercules."

"Believe me," cried the young man, "I admire you too much to send you such an infamous work of art."

Julia was beginning to reply, when they were both startled by a knocking at the door.

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth!"

"Don't be afraid, my dear girl," said Gideon, laying his hand tenderly on her arm.

"I know it's the police," she whispered. "They are coming to complain about the statue."

The knock was repeated. It was louder than before, and more impatient.

"It's Morris," cried Julia, in a startled voice, and she ran to the door and opened it.

It was indeed Morris that stood before them; not the Morris of ordinary days, but a wild-looking fellow, pale and haggard, with blood-shot eyes, and a two-days' beard upon his chin.

"The barrel!" he cried. "Where's the barrel that came this morning?" and he stared about the lobby, his eyes, as they fell upon the legs of Hercules, literally goggling in his head. "What is that?" he screamed. "What is that wax-work? Speak, you fool! What is that? and where's the barrel—the water-butt?"

"No barrel came, Morris," responded Julia

coldly. "This is the only thing that has arrived."

"This!" shrieked the miserable man. "I never heard of it!"

"It came addressed in your hand," replied Julia; "we had nearly to pull the house down to get it in, and that is all that I can tell you."

Morris gazed at her in utter bewilderment. He passed his hand over his forehead, he leaned against the wall like a man about to faint. Then his tongue was loosed, and he overwhelmed the girl with torrents of abuse. Such fire, such directness, such a choice of ungentlemanly language, none had ever before suspected Morris to possess; and the girl trembled and shrank before his fury.

"You shall not speak to Miss Hazeltine in that way," said Gideon, sternly. "It is what I will not suffer."

"I shall speak to the girl as I like," returned Morris, with a fresh outburst of anger. "I'll speak to the hussy as she deserves."

"Not a word more, sir, not one word," cried Gideon. "Miss Hazeltine," he continued, addressing the young girl, "you cannot stay a moment longer in the same house with this unmanly fellow. Here is my arm, let me take you where you will be secure from insult."

"Mr. Forsyth," returned Julia, "you are right, I cannot stay here longer, and I am sure I trust myself to an honourable gentleman."

Pale and resolute, Gideon offered her his arm, and the pair descended the steps, followed by Morris clamouring for the latch-key.

Julia had scarcely handed the key to Morris before an empty hansom drove smartly into John Street. It was hailed by both men, and as the cabman drew up his restive horse, Morris made a dash into the vehicle.

"Sixpence above fare," he cried, recklessly. "Waterloo Station for your life. Sixpence for yourself!"

"Make it a shilling, Guv'ner," said the man with a grin, "the other parties were first."

"A shilling then," cried Morris, with the inward reflection that he would reconsider it at Waterloo. The man whipped up his horse, and the hansom vanished from John Street.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIBULATIONS OF MORRIS: PART THE FIRST

AS the hansom span through the streets of London, Morris sought to rally the forces of his mind. The water-butt with the dead body had miscarried, and it was essential to recover it. So much was clear; and if, by some blest good-fortune, it was still at the station, all might be well. If it had been sent out, however, if it were already in the hands of some wrong person, matters looked more ominous. People who receive unexplained packages are usually keen to have them open; the example of Miss Hazeltine (whom he cursed again) was there to remind him of the circumstance; and if any one had opened the water-butt—"Oh, Lord," cried Morris at the thought, and carried his hand to his damp forehead. The private conception of any breach of law is apt to be inspiriting, for the scheme (while yet inchoate) wears dashing and attractive colours. Not so in the least that part of the criminal's later reflections which deal with the police. That useful corps (as Morris now

began to think) had scarce been kept sufficiently in view when he embarked upon his enterprise. "I must play devilish close," he reflected, and he was aware of an exquisite thrill of fear in the region of the spine.

"Main line, or loop?" inquired the cabman, through the scuttle.

"Main line," replied Morris, and mentally decided that the man should have his shilling after all. "It would be madness to attract attention," thought he. "But what this thing will cost me, first and last, begins to be a nightmare!"

He passed through the booking office and wandered disconsolately on the platform. It was a breathing space in the day's traffic; there were few people there, and these for the most part quiescent on the benches. Morris seemed to attract no remark, which was a good thing; but, on the other hand, he was making no progress in his quest. Something must be done, something must be risked; every passing instant only added to his dangers. Summoning all his courage, he stopped a porter, and asked him if he remembered receiving a barrel by the morning train; he was anxious to get information, for the barrel belonged to a friend. "It is a matter of some moment," he added, "for it contains specimens."

"I was not here this morning, sir," responded the porter, somewhat reluctantly, "but I'll ask

Bill. Do you recollect, Bill, to have got a barrel from Bournemouth this morning containing specimens?"

"I don't know about specimens," replied Bill; "but the party as received the barrel I mean raised a sight of trouble."

"What's that?" cried Morris, in the agitation of the moment, pressing a penny into the man's hand.

"You see, sir, the barrel arrived at one-thirty; no one claimed it till about three, when a small, sickly looking gentleman (probably a curate) came up, and sez he, 'Have you got anything for Pitman,' or 'Will'm Bent Pitman,' if I recollect right. 'I don't exactly know,' sez I, 'but I rather fancy that there barrel bears that name.' The little man went up to the barrel, and seemed regularly all took aback when he saw the address, and then he pitched into us for not having brought what he wanted. 'I don't care a damn what you want,' sez I to him, 'but if you are Will'm Bent Pitman, there's your barrel."

"Well, and did he take it?" cried the breathless Morris.

"Well, sir," returned Bill, "it appears it was a packing-case he was after. The packing-case came; that's sure enough, because it was about the biggest packing-case ever I clapped eyes on. And this Pitman he seemed a good deal cut up, and he had the superintendent out and they

got hold of the van-man—him as took the packing-case. Well, sir," continued Bill, with a smile, "I never see a man in such a state; everybody about that van was mortal, bar the horses. Some gen'leman (as well as I could make out) had given the van-man a sov.; and so that was where the trouble come in, you see."

"But what did he say?" gasped Morris.

"I don't know as he *said* much, sir," said Bill. "But he offered to fight this Pitman for a pot of beer. He had lost his book, too, and the receipts; and his men were all as mortal as himself. Oh, they were all like"—and Bill paused for a simile—"like lords! the superintendent sacked them on the spot."

"Oh, come, but that's not so bad," said Morris, with a bursting sigh. "He couldn't tell where he took the packing-case, then?"

"Not he," said Bill, "nor yet nothink else."

"And what—what did Pitman do?" asked Morris.

"Oh, he went off with the barrel in a four-wheeler, very trembling like," replied Bill. "I don't believe he's a gentleman as has good health."

"Well, so the barrel's gone," said Morris, half to himself.

"You may depend on that, sir," returned the porter. "But you had better see the superintendent."

"Not in the least, it's of no account," said

Morris. "It only contained specimens." And he walked hastily away.

Ensconced once more in a hansom, he proceeded to reconsider his position. Suppose (he thought), suppose he should accept defeat and declare his uncle's death at once? He should lose the tontine, and with that the last hope of his seven thousand eight hundred pounds. But on the other hand, since the shilling to the hansom cabman, he had begun to see that crime was expensive in its course, and since the loss of the water-butt, that it was uncertain in its consequences. Quietly at first, and then with growing heat, he reviewed the advantages of backing out. It involved a loss; but (come to think of it) no such great loss after all; only that of the tontine, which had been always a toss-up, which at bottom he had never really expected. He reminded himself of that eagerly; he congratulated himself upon his constant moderation. He had never really expected the tontine; he had never even very definitely hoped to recover his seven thousand eight hundred pounds; he had been hurried into the whole thing by Michael's obvious dishonesty. Yes, it would probably be better to draw back from this high-flying venture, settle back on the leather business——

"Great God!" cried Morris, bounding in the hansom like a Jack-in-a-box. "I have not only not gained the tontine—I have lost the leather business!"

Such was the monstrous fact. He had no power to sign; he could not draw a check for thirty shillings; until he could produce legal evidence of his uncle's death, he was a penniless outcast—and as soon as he produced it he had lost the tontine! There was no hesitation on the part of Morris; to drop the tontine like a hot chestnut, to concentrate all his forces on the leather business and the rest of his small but legitimate inheritance, was the decision of a single instant. And the next, the full extent of his calamity was suddenly disclosed to him. Declare his uncle's death? He couldn't! Since the body was lost, Joseph had (in a legal sense) become immortal.

There was no created vehicle big enough to contain Morris and his woes. He paid the hansom off and walked on he knew not whither.

"I seem to have gone into this business with too much precipitation," he reflected, with a deadly sigh. "I fear it seems too ramified for a person of my powers of mind."

And then a remark of his uncle's flashed into his memory: If you want to think clearly, put it all down on paper. "Well, the old boy knew a thing or two," said Morris. "I will try; but I don't believe the paper was ever made that will clear my mind."

He entered a place of public entertainment, ordered bread and cheese, and writing materials, and sat down before them heavily. He tried

the pen; it was an excellent pen, but what was he to write? "I have it," cried Morris. "Robinson Crusoe and the double columns!" He prepared his paper after that classic model and began as follows:

Bad.	*Good.*
1. I have lost my uncle's body.	1. But then Pitman has found it.

"Stop a bit," said Morris, " I am letting the spirit of antithesis run away with me. Let's start again."

Bad.	*Good.*
1. I have lost my uncle's body.	1. But then I no longer require to bury it.
2. I have lost the tontine.	2. But I may still save that if Pitman disposes of the body, and if I can find a physician who will stick at nothing.
3. I have lost the leather business and the rest of my uncle's succession.	3. But not if Pitman gives the body up to the police.

"Oh, but in that case I go to jail; I had forgot that," thought Morris. "Indeed, I don't know that I had better dwell on that hypothesis at all; it's all very well to talk of facing the worst; but in a case of this kind, a man's first duty is to his own nerve. Is there any answer to No. 3? Is there any possible good side to such a beastly bungle? There must be, of course, or where would be the use of this double-entry business?

And—by George, I have it!" he exclaimed; "it's exactly the same as the last!" And he hastily rewrote the passage:

Bad.	*Good.*
3. I have lost the leather business and the rest of my uncle's succession.	3. But not if I can find a physician who will stick at nothing.

"This venal doctor seems quite a desideratum," he reflected. "I want him first to give me a certificate that my uncle is dead, so that I may get the leather business; and then that he's alive—but here we are again at the incompatible interests!" And he returned to his tabulation:

Bad.	*Good.*
4. I have almost no money.	4. But there is plenty in the bank.
5. Yes, but I can't get the money in the bank.	5. But—well, that seems unhappily to be the case.
6. I have left the bill for eight hundred pounds in Uncle Joseph's pocket.	6. But if Pitman is only a dishonest man, the presence of this bill may lead him to keep the whole thing dark and throw the body into the New Cut.
7. Yes, but if Pitman is dishonest and finds the bill, he will know who Joseph is, and he may blackmail me.	7. Yes, but if I am right about Uncle Masterman, I can blackmail Michael.
8. But I can't blackmail Michael (which is, besides, a very dangerous thing to do) until I find out.	8. Worse luck!

	Bad.	*Good.*
9.	The leather business will soon want money for current expenses, and I have none to give.	9. But the leather business is a sinking ship.
10.	Yes, but it's all the ship I have.	10. A fact.
11.	John will soon want money, and I have none to give.	11.
12.	And the venal doctor will want money down.	12.
13.	And if Pitman is dishonest and don't send me to jail, he will want a fortune.	13.

"Oh, this seems to be a very one-sided business," exclaimed Morris. "There's not so much in this method as I was led to think." He crumpled the paper up and threw it down; and then, the next moment, picked it up again and ran it over. "It seems it's on the financial point that my position is weakest," he reflected. "Is there positively no way of raising the wind? In a vast city like this, and surrounded by all the resources of civilisation, it seems not to be conceived! Let us have no more precipitation. Is there nothing I can sell? My collection of signet——." But at the thought of scattering these beloved treasures, the blood leaped into Morris's cheek. "I would rather die!" he exclaimed, and cramming his hat upon his head, strode forth into the streets.

"I *must* raise funds," he thought. "My uncle being dead, the money in the bank is mine; or would be mine, but for the cursed injustice that has pursued me ever since I was an orphan in a commercial academy. I know what any other man would do; any other man in Christendom would forge; although I don't know why I call it forging, either, when Joseph's dead, and the funds are my own. When I think of that, when I think that my uncle is really as dead as mutton, and that I can't prove it, my gorge rises at the injustice of the whole affair. I used to feel bitterly about that seven thousand eight hundred pounds; it seems a trifle now! Dear me, why, the day before yesterday I was comparatively happy."

And Morris stood on the sidewalk and heaved another sobbing sigh.

"Then there's another thing," he resumed; "can I? Am I able? Why didn't I practise different handwritings while I was young? How a fellow regrets those lost opportunities when he grows up! But there's one comfort; it's not morally wrong; I can try it on with a clear conscience, and even if I was found out, I wouldn't greatly care—morally, I mean. And then, if I succeed, and if Pitman is staunch—there's nothing to do but find a venal doctor; and that ought to be simple enough in a place like London. By all accounts the town's alive with them. It wouldn't do, of course, to advertise for a cor-

rupt physician; that would be impolitic. No, I suppose a fellow has simply to spot along the streets for a red lamp and herbs in the window, and then you go in and—and—and put it to him plainly; though it seems a delicate step."

He was near home now, after many devious wanderings, and turned up John Street. As he thrust his latch-key in the lock, another mortifying reflection struck him to the heart.

"Not even this house is mine till I can prove him dead," he snarled, and slammed the door behind him so that the windows in the attic rattled.

Night had long fallen; long ago the lamps and the shop-fronts had begun to glitter down the endless streets; the lobby was pitch-dark; and, as the devil would have it, Morris barked his shins and sprawled all his length over the pedestal of Hercules. The pain was sharp; his temper was already thoroughly undermined; by a last misfortune his hand closed on the hammer as he fell; and, in a spasm of childish irritation, he turned and struck at the offending statue. There was a splintering crash.

"O Lord, what have I done next?" wailed Morris; and he groped his way to find a candle. "Yes," he reflected, as he stood with the light in his hand and looked upon the mutilated leg, from which about a pound of muscle was detached. "Yes, I have destroyed a genuine antique; I may be in for thousands!" And then

there sprung up in his bosom a sort of angry hope. "Let me see," he thought. "Julia's got rid of; there's nothing to connect me with that beast, Forsyth; the men were all drunk, and (what's better) they've been all discharged. Oh, come, I think this is another case for moral courage! I'll deny all knowledge of the thing."

A moment more, and he stood again before the Hercules, his lips sternly compressed, the coal-axe and the meat-cleaver under his arm. The next, he had fallen upon the packing-case. This had been already seriously undermined by the operations of Gideon; a few well-directed blows, and it already quaked and gaped; yet a few more, and it fell about Morris in a shower of boards followed by an avalanche of straw.

And now the leather merchant could behold the nature of his task; and at the first sight his spirit quailed. It was indeed, no more ambitious a task for De Lesseps, with all his men and horses, to attack the hills of Panama, than for a single, slim young gentleman, with no previous experience of labour in a quarry, to measure himself against that bloated monster on his pedestal. And yet the pair were well encountered: on the one side, bulk—on the other, genuine heroic fire.

"Down you shall come, you great big ugly brute!" cried Morris aloud, with something of

that passion which swept the Parisian mob against the walls of the Bastille. "Down you shall come, this night. I'll have none of you in my lobby."

The face, from its indecent expression, had particularly animated the zeal of our iconoclast; and it was against the face that he began his operations. The great height of the demigod—for he stood a fathom and half in his stocking-feet—offered a preliminary obstacle to this attack. But here, in the first skirmish of the battle, intellect already began to triumph over matter. By means of a pair of library steps, the injured householder gained a posture of advantage; and with great swipes of the coal-axe, proceeded to decapitate the brute.

Two hours later, what had been the erect image of a gigantic coal-porter turned miraculously white, was now no more than a medley of disjected members: the quadragenarian torso prone against the pedestal; the lascivious countenance leering down the kitchen stair; the legs, the arms, the hands, and even the fingers, scattered broadcast on the lobby floor. Half an hour more, and all the débris had been laboriously carted to the kitchen; and Morris, with a gentle sentiment of triumph, looked round upon the scene of his achievements. Yes, he could deny all knowledge of it now: the lobby, beyond the fact that it was partly ruinous, betrayed no trace of the passage of Hercules. But it was a

weary Morris that crept up to bed; his arms and shoulders ached, the palms of his hands burned from the rough kisses of the coal-axe, and there was one smarting finger that stole continually to his mouth. Sleep long delayed to visit the dilapidated hero, and with the first peep of day it had again deserted him.

The morning, as though to accord with his disastrous fortunes, dawned inclemently. An easterly gale was shouting in the streets; flaws of rain angrily assailed the windows; and as Morris dressed, the draught from the fireplace vividly played about his legs.

"I think," he could not help observing, bitterly, "that with all I have to bear, they might have given me decent weather."

There was no bread in the house, for Miss Hazeltine (like all women left to themselves) had subsisted entirely upon cake. But some of this was found, and (along with what the poets call a glass of fair, cold water) made up a semblance of a morning meal. And then down he sat undauntedly to his delicate task.

Nothing can be more interesting than the study of signatures, written (as they are) before meals and after, during indigestion and intoxication; written when the signer is trembling for the life of his child, or has come from winning the Derby, in his lawyer's office, or under the bright eyes of his sweetheart. To the vulgar, these seem never the same; but to the expert, the bank

clerk, or the lithographer, they are constant quantities and as recognisable as the North Star to the night-watch on deck.

To all this Morris was alive. In the theory of that graceful art in which he was now embarking, our spirited leather merchant was beyond all reproach. But happily for the investor, forgery is an affair of practice. And as Morris sat surrounded by examples of his uncle's signature, and his own incompetence, insidious depression stole upon his spirits. From time to time the wind wuthered in the chimney at his back; from time to time there swept over Bloomsbury a squall so dark that he must rise and light the gas; about him was the chill and the mean disorder of a house out of commission —the floor bare, the sofa heaped with books and accounts enveloped in a dirty table-cloth, the pens rusted, the paper glazed with a thick film of dust; and yet these were but adminicles of misery, and the true root of his depression lay round him on the table in the shape of misbegotten forgeries.

"It's one of the strangest things I ever heard of," he complained. "It almost seems as if it was a talent that I didn't possess." He went once more minutely through his proofs. "A clerk would simply gibe at them," said he. "Well, there's nothing else but tracing possible."

He waited till a squall had passed and there came a blink of scowling daylight. Then he

went to the window, and in the face of all John Street traced his uncle's signature. It was a poor thing at the best. "But it must do," said he, as he stood gazing wofully on his handiwork. "He's dead anyway." And he filled up the cheque for a couple of hundred and sallied forth for the Anglo-Patagonian Bank.

There, at the desk at which he was accustomed to transact business, and with as much indifference as he could assume, Morris presented the forged cheque to the big, red-bearded Scots teller. The teller seemed to view it with surprise; and as he turned it this way and that, and even scrutinised the signature with a magnifying glass, his surprise appeared to warm into disfavour. Begging to be excused for a moment, he passed away into the rearmost quarters of the bank; whence, after an appreciable interval, he returned again in earnest talk with a superior, an oldish and a baldish, but a very gentlemanly man.

"Mr. Morris Finsbury, I believe," said the gentlemanly man, fixing Morris with a pair of double eye-glasses.

"That is my name," said Morris, quavering. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Well, the fact is, Mr. Finsbury, you see we are rather surprised at receiving this," said the other, flicking at the cheque. "There are no effects."

"No effects?" cried Morris. "Why, I know

myself there must be eight and twenty hundred pounds, if there's a penny."

"Two seven six four, I think," replied the gentlemanly man; "but it was drawn yesterday."

"Drawn!" cried Morris.

"By your uncle himself, sir," continued the other. "Not only that, but we discounted a bill for him for—let me see—how much was it for, Mr. Bell?"

"Eight hundred, Mr. Judkin," replied the teller.

"Dent Pitman!" cried Morris, staggering back.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Judkin.

"It's—it's only an expletive," said Morris.

"I hope there's nothing wrong, Mr. Finsbury," said Mr. Bell.

"All I can tell you," said Morris, with a harsh laugh, "is that the whole thing's impossible. My uncle is at Bournemouth, unable to move."

"Really!" cried Mr. Bell, and he recovered the cheque from Mr. Judkin. "But this cheque is dated in London, and to-day," he observed. "How d'ye account for that, sir?"

"Oh, that was a mistake," said Morris, and a deep tide of colour dyed his face and neck.

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Judkin, but he looked at his customer inquiringly.

"And—and—," resumed Morris, "even if there were no effects—this is a very trifling sum to overdraw—our firm—the name of Finsbury

is surely good enough for such a wretched sum as this."

"No doubt, Mr. Finsbury," returned Mr. Judkin; "and if you insist I will take it into consideration; but I hardly think—in short, Mr. Finsbury, if there had been nothing else, the signature seems hardly all that we could wish."

"That's of no consequence," replied Morris, nervously. "I'll get my uncle to sign another. The fact is," he went on, with a bold stroke, "my uncle is so far from well at present that he was unable to sign this cheque without assistance, and I fear that my holding the pen for him may have made the difference in the signature."

Mr. Judkin shot a keen glance into Morris's face; and then turned and looked at Mr. Bell.

"Well," he said, "it seems as if we have been victimised by a swindler. Pray tell Mr. Finsbury we shall put detectives on at once. As for this cheque of yours, I regret that, owing to the way it was signed, the bank can hardly consider it—what shall I say?—business-like," and he returned the cheque across the counter.

Morris took it up mechanically, he was thinking of something very different.

"In a case of this kind," he began, "I believe the loss falls on us; I mean upon my uncle and myself."

"It does not, sir," replied Mr. Bell; "the bank is responsible, and the bank will either recover

the money or refund it, you may depend on that."

Morris's face fell; then it was visited by another gleam of hope.

"I'll tell you what," he said, "you leave this entirely in my hands. I'll sift the matter. I've an idea, at any rate; and detectives," he added appealingly, "are so expensive."

"The bank would not hear of it," returned Mr. Judkin. "The bank stands to lose between three and four thousand pounds; it will spend as much more if necessary. An undiscovered forger is a permanent danger. We shall clear it up to the bottom, Mr. Finsbury, set your mind at rest on that."

"Then I'll stand the loss," said Morris, boldly. "I order you to abandon the search." He was determined that no inquiry should be made.

"I beg your pardon," returned Mr. Judkin, "but we have nothing to do with you in this matter, which is one between your uncle and ourselves. If he should take this opinion, and will either come here himself or will let me see him in his sick-room——"

"Quite impossible," cried Morris.

"Well, then, you see," said Mr. Judkin, "how my hands are tied. The whole affair must go at once into the hands of the police."

Morris mechanically folded the cheque and restored it to his pocket-book.

"Good-morning," said he, and scrambled somehow out of the bank.

"I don't know what they suspect," he reflected, "I can't make them out, their whole behaviour is thoroughly unbusiness-like. But it doesn't matter: all's up with everything. The money has been paid; the police are on the scent; in two hours, that idiot Pitman will be nabbed —and the whole story of the dead body in the evening papers."

If he could have heard what passed in the bank after his departure, he would have been less alarmed, perhaps more mortified.

"That was a curious affair, Mr. Bell," said Mr. Judkin.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Bell, "but I think we have given him a fright."

"Oh, we shall hear no more of Mr. Morris Finsbury," returned the other; "it was a first attempt, and the house have dealt with us so long that I was anxious to deal gently. But I suppose, Mr. Bell, there can be no mistake about yesterday? It was old Mr. Finsbury himself?"

"There could be no possible doubt of that," said Mr. Bell, with a chuckle. "He explained to me the principles of banking."

"Well, well," said Mr. Judkin. "The next time he calls, ask him to step into my room. It is only proper he should be warned."

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH WILLIAM DENT PITMAN TAKES LEGAL ADVICE

NORFOLK STREET, King's Road—jocularly known among Mr. Pitman's lodgers as "Norfolk Island," is neither a long, a handsome, nor a pleasing thoroughfare. Dirty, undersized maids-of-all-work issue from it in pursuit of beer, or linger on its sidewalk listening to the voice of love. The cat's-meat man passes twice a day. An occasional organ-grinder wanders in and wanders out again, disgusted. In holiday time the street is the arena of the young bloods of the neighbourhood, and the householders have an opportunity of studying the manly art of self-defence. And yet Norfolk Street has one claim to be respectable, for it contains not a single shop—unless you count the public-house at the corner, which is really in the King's Road.

The door of No. 7 bore a brass plate inscribed with the legend "W. D. Pitman, Artist." It was not a particularly clean brass plate, nor was No. 7 itself a particularly inviting place of residence.

And yet it had a character of its own, such as may well quicken the pulse of the reader's curiosity. For here was the home of an artist—and a distinguished artist too, highly distinguished by his ill-success, which had never been made the subject of an article in the illustrated magazines. No wood-engraver had ever reproduced "a corner in the back drawing-room" or "the studio mantelpiece" of No. 7; no young lady author had ever commented on "the unaffected simplicity" with which Mr. Pitman received her in the midst of his "treasures." It is an omission I would gladly supply, but our business is only with the backward parts and "abject rear" of this æsthetic dwelling.

Here was a garden, boasting a dwarf fountain (that never played) in the centre, a few grimy-looking flowers in pots, two or three newly-planted trees which the spring of Chelsea visited without noticeable consequence, and two or three statues after the antique, representing satyrs and nymphs in the worst possible style of sculptured art. On one side, the garden was over-shadowed by a pair of crazy studios, usually hired out to the more obscure and youthful practitioners of British art. Opposite these another lofty out-building, somewhat more carefully finished, and boasting of a communication with the house and a private door on the back lane, enshrined the multifarious industry of Mr. Pitman. All day, it is true, he was engaged in

the work of education at a seminary for young ladies; but the evenings at least were his own, and these he would prolong far into the night, now dashing off *A landscape with waterfall* in oil, now a volunteer bust ("in marble," as he would gently but proudly observe) of some public character, now stooping his chisel to a mere *nymph* ("for a gas-bracket on a stair, sir"), or a life-size *Infant Samuel* for a religious nursery. Mr. Pitman had studied in Paris, and he had studied in Rome, supplied with funds by a fond parent who went subsequently bankrupt, in consequence of a fall in corsets; and though he was never thought to have the smallest modicum of talent, it was at one time supposed that he had learned his business. Eighteen years of what is called "tuition" had relieved him of the dangerous knowledge. His artist lodgers would sometimes reason with him; they would point out to him how impossible it was to paint by gas-light, or to sculpture life-sized nymphs without a model.

"I know that," he would reply. "No one in Norfolk Street knows it better; and if I were rich I should certainly employ the best models in London; but being poor, I have taught myself to do without them. An occasional model would only disturb my ideal conception of the figure, and be a positive impediment in my career. As for painting by an artificial light," he would continue, "that is simply a knack I

have found it necessary to acquire, my days being engrossed in the work of tuition."

At the moment when we must present him to our readers, Pitman was in his studio alone, by the dying light of the October day. He sat (sure enough with "unaffected simplicity") in a Windsor chair, his low-crowned black felt hat by his side; a dark, weak, harmless, pathetic little man, clad in the hue of mourning, his coat longer than is usual with the laity, his neck enclosed in a collar without a parting, his neckcloth pale in hue and simply tied; the whole outward man, except for a pointed beard, tentatively clerical. There was a thinning on the top of Pitman's head, there were silver hairs at Pitman's temple; poor gentleman, he was no longer young; and years, and poverty, and humble ambition thwarted, make a cheerless lot.

In front of him, in the corner by the door, there stood a portly barrel; and let him turn them where he might, it was always to the barrel that his eyes and his thoughts returned.

"Should I open it? Should I return it? Should I communicate with Mr. Semitopolis at once?" he wondered. "No," he concluded finally, "nothing without Mr. Finsbury's advice." And he arose and produced a shabby leathern desk. It opened without the formality of unlocking, and displayed the thick cream-coloured note-paper on which Mr. Pitman was in the habit of communicating with the proprie-

tors of schools and the parents of his pupils. He placed the desk on the table by the window, and taking a saucer of Indian ink from the chimney-piece, laboriously composed the following letter:

"My dear Mr. Finsbury," it ran, "would it be presuming on your kindness if I asked you to pay me a visit here this evening? It is in no trifling matter that I invoke your valuable assistance, for need I say more than it concerns the welfare of Mr. Semitopolis's statue of Hercules? I write you in great agitation of mind; for I have made all inquiries, and greatly fear that this work of ancient art has been mislaid. I labour besides under another perplexity, not unconnected with the first. Pray excuse the inelegance of this scrawl, and believe me yours in haste, William D. Pitman."

Armed with this he set forth and rang the bell of No. 233 King's Road, the private residence of Michael Finsbury. He had met the lawyer at a time of great public excitement in Chelsea; Michael, who had a sense of humour and a great deal of careless kindness in his nature, followed the acquaintance up, and having come to laugh, remained to drop into a contemptuous kind of friendship. By this time, which was four years after the first meeting, Pitman was the lawyer's dog.

"No," said the elderly housekeeper who opened the door in person, "Mr. Michael's not in yet. But ye're looking terrible poorly, Mr. Pitman. Take a glass of sherry, sir, to cheer ye up."

"No, I thank you, ma'am," replied the artist. "It is very good in you, but I scarcely feel in

sufficient spirits for sherry. Just give Mr. Finsbury this note, and ask him to look round—to the door in the lane, you will please tell him; I shall be in the studio all evening."

And he turned again into the street and walked slowly homeward. A hair-dresser's window caught his attention, and he stared long and earnestly at the proud, highborn, waxen lady in evening dress, who circulated in the centre of the show. The artist woke in him, in spite of his troubles.

"It is all very well to run down the men who make these things," he cried, "but there's a something—there's a haughty, indefinable something about that figure. It's what I tried for in my *Empress Eugénie*," he added, with a sigh.

And he went home reflecting on the quality. "They don't teach you that direct appeal in Paris," he thought. "It's British. Come, I am going to sleep, I must wake up, I must aim higher —aim higher," cried the little artist to himself. All through his tea and afterward, as he was giving his eldest boy a lesson on the fiddle, his mind dwelt no longer on his troubles, but he was wrapt into the better land; and no sooner was he at liberty than he hastened with positive exhilaration to his studio.

Not even the sight of the barrel could entirely cast him down. He flung himself with rising zest into his work—a bust of Mr. Gladstone from a photograph; turned (with extraordinary

success) the difficulty of the back of the head, for which he had no documents beyond a hazy recollection of a public meeting; delighted himself by his treatment of the collar; and was only recalled to the cares of life by Michael Finsbury's rattle at the door.

"Well, what's wrong?" said Michael, advancing to the grate, where, knowing his friend's delight in a bright fire, Mr. Pitman had not spared the fuel. "I suppose you have come to grief somehow."

"There is no expression strong enough," said the artist. "Mr. Semitopolis's statue has not turned up, and I am afraid I shall be answerable for the money; but I think nothing of that—what I fear, my dear Mr. Finsbury, what I fear—alas, that I should have to say it!—is exposure. The Hercules was to be smuggled out of Italy; a thing positively wrong, a thing in which a man of my principles and in my responsible position should have taken (as I now see too late) no part whatever."

"This sounds like very serious work," said the lawyer. "It will require a great deal of drink, Pitman."

"I took the liberty of—in short, of being prepared for you," replied the artist, pointing to a kettle, a bottle of gin, a lemon, and glasses.

Michael mixed himself a grog, and offered the artist a cigar.

"No, thank you," said Pitman. "I used occa-

sionally to be rather partial to it, but the smell is so disagreeable about the clothes."

"All right," said the lawyer. "I am comfortable now. Unfold your tale."

At some length, Pitman set forth his sorrows. He had gone to-day to Waterloo, expecting to receive the colossal Hercules, and he had received instead a barrel not big enough to hold Discobolus; yet the barrel was addressed in the hand (with which he was perfectly acquainted) of his Roman correspondent. What was stranger still, a case had arrived by the same train, large enough and heavy enough to contain the Hercules; and this case had been taken to an address now undiscoverable. "The van-man (I regret to say it) had been drinking, and his language was such as I could never bring myself to repeat. He was at once discharged by the superintendent of the line, who behaved most properly throughout and is to make inquiries at Southampton. In the meanwhile, what was I to do? I left my address and brought the barrel home; but remembering an old adage, I determined not to open it except in the presence of my lawyer."

"Is that all?" asked Michael. "I don't see any cause to worry. The Hercules has stuck upon the road. It will drop in to-morrow or the day after; and as for the barrel, depend upon it, it's a testimonial from one of your young ladies, and probably contains oysters."

"Oh, don't speak so loud!" cried the little artist. "It would cost me my place if I were heard to speak lightly of the young ladies, and besides, why oysters from Italy? and why should they come to me addressed in Signor Ricardi's hand?"

"Well, let's have a look at it," said Michael. "Let's roll it forward to the light."

The two men rolled the barrel from the corner, and stood it on end before the fire.

"It's heavy enough to be oysters," remarked Michael, judiciously.

"Shall we open it at once?" inquired the artist, who had grown decidedly cheerful under the combined effects of company and gin; and without waiting for a reply, he began to strip as if for a prize-fight, tossed his clerical collar in the waste-paper basket, hung his clerical coat upon a nail, and with a chisel in one hand and a hammer in the other, struck the first blow of the evening.

"That's the style, William Dent!" cried Michael. "There's fire for your money! It may be a romantic visit from one of the young ladies —a sort of Cleopatra business. Have a care, and don't stave in Cleopatra's head."

But the sight of Pitman's alacrity was infectious. The lawyer could sit still no longer. Tossing his cigar into the fire, he snatched the instrument from the unwilling hands of the artist, and fell to himself. Soon the sweat stood in beads

upon his large, fair brow; his stylish trousers were defaced with iron rust, and the state of his chisel testified to misdirected energies.

A cask is not an easy thing to open, even when you set about it in the right way; when you set about it wrongly, the whole structure must be resolved into its elements. Such was the course pursued alike by the artist and the lawyer. Presently the last hoop had been removed—a couple of smart blows tumbled the staves upon the ground—and what had once been a barrel was no more than a confused heap of broken and distorted boards.

In the midst of these, a certain dismal something, swathed in blankets, remained for an instant upright, and then toppled to one side and heavily collapsed before the fire. Even as the thing subsided, an eye-glass tingled to the floor and rolled toward the screaming Pitman.

"Hold your tongue!" said Michael. He dashed to the house door and locked it; then, with a pale face and bitten lip, he drew near, pulled aside a corner of the swathing blanket, and recoiled, shuddering.

There was a long silence in the studio.

"Now tell me," said Michael, in a low voice: "Had you any hand in it?" and he pointed to the body.

The little artist could only utter broken and disjointed sounds.

Michael poured some gin into a glass. "Drink

that," he said. "Don't be afraid of me. I'm your friend through thick and thin."

Pitman put the liquor down untasted.

"I swear before God," he said, "this is another mystery to me. In my worst fears, I never dreamed of such a thing. I would not lay a finger on a sucking infant."

"That's all square," said Michael, with a sigh of huge relief. "I believe you, old boy." And he shook the artist warmly by the hand. "I thought for a moment," he added, with rather a ghastly smile, "I thought for a moment you might have made way with Mr. Semitopolis."

"It would make no difference if I had," groaned Pitman. "All is at an end for me. There's the writing on the wall."

"To begin with," said Michael, "let's get him out of sight; for to be quite plain with you, Pitman, I don't like your friend's appearance." And with that the lawyer shuddered. "Where can we put it?"

"You might put it in the closet there—if you could bear to touch it," answered the artist.

"Somebody has to do it, Pitman," returned the lawyer; "and it seems as if it had to be me. You go over to the table, turn your back, and mix me a grog; that's a fair division of labour."

About ninety seconds later, the closet-door was heard to shut.

"There," observed Michael, "that's more home-like. You can turn now, my pallid Pit-

man. Is this the grog?" he ran on. "Heaven forgive you, it's a lemonade!"

"But oh, Finsbury, what are we to do with it?" wailed the artist, laying a clutching hand upon the lawyer's arm.

"Do with it?" repeated Michael. "Bury it in one of your flower-beds, and erect one of your own statues for a monument. I tell you we should look devilish romantic shovelling out the sod by the moon's pale ray. Here, put some gin in this."

"I beg of you, Mr. Finsbury, do not trifle with my misery," cried Pitman. "You see before you a man who has been all his life—I do not hesitate to say it—eminently respectable. Even in this solemn hour I can lay my hand upon my heart without a blush. Except on the really trifling point of the smuggling of the Hercules (and even of that I now humbly repent), my life has been entirely fit for publication. I never feared the light," cried the little man; "and now—now—!"

"Cheer up, old boy," said Michael. "I assure you we should count this little contretemps a trifle at the office; it's the sort of thing that may occur to any one; and if you're perfectly sure you had no hand in it——"

"What language am I to find——" began Pitman.

"Oh, I'll do that part of it," interrupted Michael, "you have no experience. But the

point is this: If—or rather since—you know nothing of the crime, since the—the party in the closet—is neither your father, nor your brother, nor your creditor, nor your mother-in-law, nor what they call an injured husband——"

"Oh, my dear sir!" interjected Pitman, horrified.

"Since, in short," continued the lawyer, "you had no possible interest in the crime, we have a perfectly free field before us and a safe game to play. Indeed the problem is really entertaining; it is one I have long contemplated in the light of an A. B. case; here it is at last under my hand in specie; and I mean to pull you through. Do you hear that?—I mean to pull you through. Let me see: it's a long time since I have had what I call a genuine holiday; I'll send an excuse to-morrow to the office. We had best be lively," he added, significantly; "for we must not spoil the market for the other man."

"What do you mean?" inquired Pitman. "What other man? The inspector of police?"

"Damn the inspector of police!" remarked his companion. "If you won't take the short cut and bury this in your back garden, we must find some one who will bury it in his. We must place the affair, in short, in the hands of some one of fewer scruples and more resources."

"A private detective, perhaps?" suggested Pitman.

"There are times when you fill me with pity,"

observed the lawyer. "By the way, Pitman," he added, in another key, "I have always regretted that you have no piano in this den of yours. Even if you don't play yourself, your friends might like to entertain themselves with a little music while you were mudding."

"I shall get one at once if you like," said Pitman, nervously, anxious to please. "I play the fiddle a little as it is."

"I know you do," said Michael; "but what's the fiddle—above all as you play it? What you want is polyphonic music. And I'll tell you what it is, since it's too late for you to buy a piano I'll give you mine."

"Thank you," said the artist blankly. "You will give me yours? I am sure it's very good in you."

"Yes, I'll give you mine," continued Michael, "for the inspector of police to play on while his men are digging up your back garden."

Pitman stared at him in pained amazement.

"No, I'm not insane," Michael went on "I'm playful but quite coherent. See here, Pitman; follow me one half minute. I mean to profit by the refreshing fact that we are really and truly innocent; nothing but the presence of the—you know what—connects us with the crime; once let us get rid of it, no matter how, and there is no possible clue to trace us by. Well, I give you my piano; we'll bring it round this very night. To-morrow, we rip the fittings

out, deposit the—our friend—inside, plump the whole on a cart, and carry it to the chambers of a young gentleman whom I know by sight."

"Whom you know by sight?" repeated Pitman.

"And what is more to the purpose," continued Michael, "whose chambers I know better than he does himself. A friend of mine—I call him my friend for brevity; he is now, I understand, in Demerara and (most likely) in jail—was the previous occupant. I defended him, and I got him off too—all saved but honour; his assets were *nil*, but he gave me what he had, poor gentleman, and along with the rest—the key of his chambers. It's there that I propose to leave the piano and, shall we say Cleopatra?"

"It seems very wild," said Pitman. "And what will become of the poor young gentleman whom you know by sight?"

"It will do him good," said Michael, cheerily. "Just what he wants to steady him."

"But, my dear sir, he might be involved in a charge of—a charge of murder," gulped the artist.

"Well, he'll be just where we are," returned the lawyer. "He's innocent, you see. What hangs people, my dear Pitman, is the unfortunate circumstance of guilt."

"But indeed, indeed," pleaded Pitman, "the whole scheme appears to me so wild. Would not it be safer, after all, just to send for the police?"

"And make a scandal?" inquired Michael. "'The Chelsea Mystery; alleged innocence of Pitman'? How would that do at the Seminary?"

"It would imply my discharge," admitted the drawing-master. "I cannot deny that."

"And besides," said Michael, "I am not going to embark in such a business and have no fun for my money."

"Oh, my dear sir, is that a proper spirit?" cried Pitman.

"Oh, I only said that to cheer you up," said the unabashed Michael. "Nothing like a little judicious levity. But it's quite needless to discuss. If you mean to follow my advice, come on, and let us get the piano at once. If you don't, just drop me the word, and I'll leave you to deal with the whole thing according to your better judgment."

"You know perfectly well that I depend on you entirely," returned Pitman. "But oh, what a night is before me with that—horror in my studio! How am I to think of it on my pillow?"

"Well, you know, my piano will be there too," said Michael. "That'll raise the average."

An hour later a cart came up the lane, and the lawyer's piano—a momentous Broadwood grand—was deposited in Mr. Pitman's studio.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH MICHAEL FINSBURY ENJOYS A HOLIDAY

PUNCTUALLY at eight o'clock next morning the lawyer rattled (according to previous appointment) on the studio door. He found the artist sadly altered for the worse—bleached, bloodshot, and chalky—a man upon wires, the tail of his haggard eye still wandering to the closet. Nor was the professor of drawing less inclined to wonder at his friend. Michael was usually attired in the height of fashion, with a certain mercantile brilliancy best described perhaps as stylish; nor could anything be said against him, as a rule, but that he looked a trifle too like a wedding guest to be quite a gentleman. To-day he had fallen altogether from these heights. He wore a flannel shirt of washed-out shepherd's tartan, and a suit of reddish tweeds, of the colour known to tailors as "heather mixture"; his neckcloth was black, and tied loosely in a sailor's knot; a rusty ulster partly concealed these advantages; and his feet were shod with rough walking boots. His hat was an old soft

felt, which he removed with a flourish as he entered.

"Here I am, William Dent!" he cried, and drawing from his pocket two little wisps of reddish hair, he held them to his cheeks like side-whiskers and danced about the studio with the filmy graces of a ballet-girl.

Pitman laughed sadly. "I should never have known you," said he.

"Nor were you intended to," returned Michael, replacing his false whiskers in his pocket. "Now we must overhaul you and your wardrobe, and disguise you up to the nines."

"Disguise!" cried the artist. "Must I indeed disguise myself? Has it come to that?"

"My dear creature," returned his companion, "disguise is the spice of life. What is life, passionately exclaimed the French philosopher, without the pleasures of disguise? I don't say it's always good taste, and I know it's unprofessional; but what's the odds, down-hearted drawing-master? It has to be. We have to leave a false impression on the minds of many persons, and in particular on the mind of Mr. Gideon Forsyth—the young gentleman I know by sight—if he should have the bad taste to be at home."

"If he be at home?" faltered the artist. "That would be the end of all."

"Won't matter a d——," returned Michael airily. "Let me see your clothes, and I'll make a new man of you in a jiffy."

In the bedroom, to which he was at once conducted, Michael examined Pitman's poor and scanty wardrobe with a humorous eye, picked out a short jacket of black alpaca, and presently added to that a pair of summer trousers which somehow took his fancy as incongruous. Then, with the garments in his hand, he scrutinised the artist closely.

"I don't like that clerical collar," he remarked. "Have you nothing else?"

The professor of drawing pondered for a moment, and then brightened; "I have a pair of low-necked shirts," he said, "that I used to wear in Paris as a student. They are rather loud."

"The very thing!" ejaculated Michael. "You look perfectly beastly. Here are spats, too," he continued, drawing forth a pair of those offensive little gaiters. "Must have spats! And now you jump into these, and whistle a tune at the window for (say) three-quarters of an hour. After that you can rejoin me on the field of glory."

So saying Michael returned to the studio. It was the morning of the easterly gale; the wind blew shrilly among the statues in the garden, and drove the rain upon the skylight in the studio ceiling; and at about the same moment of time when Morris attacked the hundredth version of his uncle's signature in Bloomsbury, Michael, in Chelsea, began to rip the wires out of the Broadwood grand.

Three-quarters of an hour later Pitman was admitted to find the closet-door standing open, the closet untenanted, and the piano discreetly shut.

"It's a remarkably heavy instrument," observed Michael, and turned to consider his friend's disguise. "You must shave off that beard of yours," he said.

"My beard!" cried Pitman. "I cannot shave my beard. I cannot tamper with my appearance—my principals would object. They hold very strong views as to the appearance of the professors—young ladies are considered so romantic. My beard was regarded as quite a feature when I went about the place. It was regarded," said the artist, with rising colour, "it was regarded as unbecoming."

"You can let it grow again," returned Michael, "and then you'll be so precious ugly that they'll raise your salary."

"But I don't want to look ugly," cried the artist.

"Don't be an ass," said Michael, who hated beards and was delighted to destroy one. "Off with it like a man!"

"Of course, if you insist," said Pitman; and then he sighed, fetched some hot water from the kitchen, and setting a glass upon his easel, first clipped his beard with scissors and then shaved his chin. He could not conceal from himself, as he regarded the result, that his last claims to

manhood had been sacrificed, but Michael seemed delighted.

"A new man, I declare!" he cried. "When I give you the window-glass spectacles I have in my pocket, you'll be the beau-ideal of a French commercial traveller."

Pitman did not reply, but continued to gaze disconsolately on his image in the glass.

"Do you know," asked Michael, "what the Governor of South Carolina said to the Governor of North Carolina? 'It's a long time between drinks,' observed that powerful thinker; and if you will put your hand into the top left-hand pocket of my ulster, I have an impression you will find a flask of brandy. Thank you, Pitman," he added, as he filled out a glass for each. "Now you will give me news of this."

The artist reached out his hand for the water-jug, but Michael arrested the movement.

"Not if you went upon your knees!" he cried, "This is the finest liqueur brandy in Great Britain."

Pitman put his lips to it, set it down again, and sighed.

"Well, I must say you're the poorest companion for a holiday!" cried Michael. "If that's all you know of brandy, you shall have no more of it; and while I finish the flask, you may as well begin business. Come to think of it," he broke off, "I have made an abominable error: you should have ordered the cart before you

were disguised. Why, Pitman, what the devil's the use of you? why couldn't you have reminded me of that?"

"I never even knew there was a cart to be ordered," said the artist. "But I can take off the disguise again," he suggested eagerly.

"You would find it rather a bother to put on your beard," observed the lawyer. "No, it's a false step; the sort of thing that hangs people," he continued, with eminent cheerfulness, as he sipped his brandy; "and it can't be retraced now. Off to the mews with you, make all the arrangements; they're to take the piano from here, cart it to Victoria, and despatch it thence by rail to Cannon Street, to lie till called for in the name of Fortuné du Boisgobey."

"Isn't that rather an awkward name?" pleaded Pitman.

"Awkward?" cried Michael scornfully. "It would hang us both! Brown is both safer and easier to pronounce. Call it Brown."

"I wish," said Pitman, "for my sake, I wish you wouldn't talk so much of hanging."

"Talking about it's nothing, my boy!" returned Michael. "But take your hat and be off, and mind and pay everything beforehand."

Left to himself, the lawyer turned his attention for some time exclusively to the liqueur brandy, and his spirits, which had been pretty fair all morning, now prodigiously rose. He proceeded to adjust his whiskers finally before

the glass. "Devilish rich," he remarked, as he contemplated his reflection; "I look like a purser's mate." And at that moment, the window-glass spectacles (which he had hitherto destined for Pitman) flashed into his mind; he put them on, and fell in love with the effect. "Just what I required," he said. "I wonder what I look like now? A humorous novelist, I should think," and he began to practise divers characters of walk, naming them to himself as he proceeded. "Walk of a humorous novelist—but that would require an umbrella. Walk of a purser's mate. Walk of an Australian colonist revisiting the scenes of childhood. Walk of Sepoy colonel, ditto, ditto." And in the midst of the Sepoy colonel (which was an excellent assumption, although inconsistent with the style of his make-up), his eye lighted on the piano. This instrument was made to lock both at the top and at the keyboard, but the key of the latter had been mislaid. Michael opened it and ran his fingers over the dumb keys. "Fine instrument—full, rich tone," he observed, and he drew in a seat.

When Mr. Pitman returned to the studio, he was appalled to observe his guide, philosopher, and friend performing miracles of execution on the silent grand.

"Heaven help me!" thought the little man, "I fear he has been drinking! Mr. Finsbury," he said aloud; and Michael, without rising,

turned upon him a countenance somewhat flushed, encircled with the bush of the red whiskers, and bestridden by the spectacles. "Capriccio in B-flat on the departure of a friend," said he, continuing his noiseless evolutions.

Indignation awoke in the mind of Pitman. "Those spectacles were to be mine," he cried. "They are an essential part of my disguise."

"I am going to wear them myself," replied Michael; and he added, with some show of truth, "there would be a devil of a lot of suspicion aroused if we both wore spectacles."

"Oh, well," said the assenting Pitman, "I rather counted on them; but of course, if you insist! And at any rate, here is the cart at the door."

While the men were at work, Michael concealed himself in the closet among the débris of the barrel and the wires of the piano; and as soon as the coast was clear, the pair sallied forth by the lane, jumped into a hansom in the King's Road, and were driven rapidly toward town. It was still cold and raw and boisterous; the rain beat strongly in their faces, but Michael refused to have the glass let down; he had now suddenly donned the character of cicerone, and pointed out and lucidly commented on the sights of London, as they drove.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you don't seem to know anything of your native city. Suppose we visited the Tower? No? Well, perhaps it's a trifle out of our way. But anyway—Here,

Cabby, drive round by Trafalgar Square!" And on that historic battle-field he insisted on drawing up, while he criticised the statues and gave the artist many curious details (quite new to history) of the lives of the celebrated men they represented.

It would be difficult to express what Pitman suffered in the cab: cold, wet, terror in the capital degree, a grounded distrust of the commander under whom he served, a sense of impudency in the matter of the low-necked shirt, a bitter sense of the decline and fall involved in the deprivation of his beard, all these were among the ingredients of the bowl. To reach the restaurant, for which they were deviously steering, was the first relief. To hear Michael bespeak a private room was a second and a still greater. Nor, as they mounted the stair under the guidance of an unintelligible alien, did he fail to note with gratitude the fewness of the persons present, or the still more cheering fact that the greater part of these were exiles from the land of France. It was thus a blessed thought that none of them would be connected with the Seminary; for even the French professor, though admittedly a papist, he could scarce imagine frequenting so rakish an establishment.

The alien introduced them into a small, bare room with a single table, a sofa, and a dwarfish fire; and Michael called promptly for more coals and a couple of brandies and sodas.

"Oh, no," said Pitman, "surely not—no more to drink."

"I don't know what you would be at," said Michael, plaintively. "It's positively necessary to do something; and one shouldn't smoke before meals—I thought that was understood. You seem to have no idea of hygiene." And he compared his watch with the clock upon the chimney-piece.

Pitman fell into bitter musing; here he was, ridiculously shorn, absurdly disguised, in the company of a drunken man in spectacles, and waiting for a champagne luncheon in a restaurant painfully foreign. What would his principals think, if they could see him? What if they knew his tragic and deceitful errand?

From these reflections he was aroused by the entrance of the alien with the brandies and sodas. Michael took one and bade the waiter pass the other to his friend.

Pitman waved it from him with his hand. "Don't let me lose all self-respect," he said.

"Anything to oblige a friend," returned Michael. "But I'm not going to drink alone. Here," he added to the waiter, "you take it." And then, touching glasses, "The health of Mr. Gideon Forsyth," said he.

"Meestare Gidden Borsye," replied the waiter, and he tossed off the liquor in four gulps.

"Have another?" said Michael, with undisguised interest. "I never saw a man drink

faster. It restores one's confidence in the human race."

But the waiter excused himself politely, and assisted by some one from without, began to bring in lunch.

Michael made an excellent meal, which he washed down with a bottle of Heidsieck's dry monopole. As for the artist, he was far too uneasy to eat, and his companion flatly refused to let him share in the champagne unless he did.

"One of us must stay sober," remarked the lawyer, "and I won't give you champagne on the strength of a leg of grouse. I have to be cautious," he added, confidentially. "One drunken man, excellent business—two drunken men, all my eye."

On the production of coffee and departure of the waiter, Michael might have been observed to make portentous efforts after gravity of mien. He looked his friend in the face (one eye perhaps a trifle off), and addressed him thickly but severely.

"Enough of this fooling," was his not inappropriate exordium. "To business. Mark me closely. I am an Australian. My name is John Dickson, though you mightn't think it from my unassuming appearance. You will be relieved to hear that I am rich, sir, very rich. You can't go into this sort of thing too thoroughly, Pitman; the whole secret is preparation, and I get up my biography from the beginning, and I could tell it you now, only I have forgotten it."

"Perhaps I'm stupid——" began Pitman.

"That's it!" cried Michael. "Very stupid; but rich too—richer than I am. I thought you would enjoy it, Pitman, so I've arranged that you were to be literally wallowing in wealth. But then, on the other hand, you're only an American, and a maker of india-rubber overshoes at that. And the worst of it is—why should I conceal it from you?—the worst of it is that you're called Ezra Thomas. Now," said Michael, with a really appalling seriousness of manner, "tell me who we are."

The unfortunate little man was cross-examined till he knew these facts by heart.

"There!" cried the lawyer. "Our plans are laid. Thoroughly consistent—that's the great thing."

"But I don't understand," objected Pitman.

"Oh, you'll understand right enough when it comes to the point," said Michael, rising.

"There doesn't seem any story to it," said the artist.

"We can invent one as we go along," returned the lawyer.

"But I can't invent," protested Pitman. "I never could invent in all my life."

"You'll find you have to, my boy," was Michael's easy comment, and he began calling for the waiter, with whom he at once resumed a sparkling conversation.

It was a downcast little man that followed

him. "Of course he is very clever, but can I trust him in such a state?" he asked himself. And when they were once more in a hansom, he took heart of grace.

"Don't you think," he faltered, "it would be wiser, considering all things, to put this business off?"

"Put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day?" cried Michael, with indignation. "Never heard of such a thing! Cheer up, it's all right, go in and win—there's a lion-hearted Pitman!"

At Cannon Street, they inquired for Mr. Brown's piano, which had duly arrived, drove thence to a neighbouring mews, where they contracted for a cart, and while that was being got ready, took shelter in the harness-room beside the stove. Here the lawyer presently toppled against the wall and fell into a gentle slumber; so that Pitman found himself launched on his own resources in the midst of several staring loafers, such as love to spend unprofitable days about a stable.

"Rough day, sir," observed one. "Do you go far?"

"Yes, it's a—rather a rough day," said the artist; and then, feeling that he must change the conversation, "my friend is an Australian, he is very impulsive," he added.

"An Australian?" said another. "I've a brother myself in Melbourne. Does your friend come from that way at all?"

"No, not exactly," replied the artist, whose ideas of the geography of New Holland were a little scattered. "He lives immensely far inland, and is very rich."

The loafers gazed with great respect upon the slumbering colonist.

"Well," remarked the second speaker, "it's a mighty big place, is Australia. Do you come from there away too?"

"No, I do not," said Pitman. "I do not, and I don't want to," he added irritably. And then feeling some diversion needful, he fell upon Michael and shook him up.

"Hullo," said the lawyer, "what's wrong?"

"The cart is nearly ready," said Pitman, sternly. "I will not allow you to sleep."

"All right—no offence, old man," replied Michael, yawning. "A little sleep never did anybody any harm; I feel comparatively sober now. But what's all the hurry?" he added, looking round him glassily. "I don't see the cart, and I've forgotten where we left the piano."

What more the lawyer might have said, in the confidence of the moment, is with Pitman a matter of tremulous conjecture to this day; but by the most blessed circumstance, the cart was then announced, and Michael must bend the forces of his mind to the more difficult task of rising.

"Of course, you'll drive," he remarked to his companion, as he clambered on the vehicle.

"I drive!" cried Pitman. "I never did such a thing in my life. I cannot drive."

"Very well," responded Michael, with entire composure, "neither can I see. But just as you like. Anything to oblige a friend."

A glimpse of the ostler's darkening countenance decided Pitman. "All right," he said, desperately, "you drive. I'll tell you where to go."

On Michael in the character of charioteer (since this is not intended to be a novel of adventure) it would be superfluous to dwell at length. Pitman, as he sat holding on and gasping counsels, sole witness of this singular feat, knew not whether most to admire the driver's valour or his undeserved good fortune. But the latter at least prevailed, the cart reached Cannon Street without disaster; and Mr. Brown's piano was speedily and cleverly got on board.

"Well, sir," said the leading porter, smiling as he mentally reckoned up a handful of loose silver, "that's a mortal heavy piano."

"It's the richness of the tone," returned Michael, as he drove away.

It was but a little distance in the rain, which now fell thick and quiet, to the neighbourhood of Mr. Gideon Forsyth's chambers in the Temple. There, in a deserted by-street, Michael drew up the horses and gave them in charge to a blighted shoe-black; and the pair descending from the cart, whereon they had figured so in-

congruously, set forth on foot for the decisive scene of their adventure. For the first time, Michael displayed a shadow of uneasiness.

"Are my whiskers right?" he asked. "It would be the devil and all if I was spotted."

"They are perfectly in their place," returned Pitman, with scant attention. "But is my disguise equally effective? There is nothing more likely than that I should meet some of my patrons."

"Oh, nobody could tell you without your beard," said Michael. "All you have to do is to remember to speak slow; you speak through your nose already."

"I only hope the young man won't be at home," sighed Pitman.

"And I only hope he'll be alone," returned the lawyer. "It will save a precious sight of manœuvring."

And sure enough, when they had knocked at the door, Gideon admitted them in person to a room, warmed by a moderate fire, framed nearly to the roof in works connected with the bench of British Themis, and offering, except in one particular, eloquent testimony to the legal zeal of the proprietor. The one particular was the chimney-piece, which displayed a varied assortment of pipes, tobacco, cigar-boxes, and yellow-backed French novels.

"Mr. Forsyth, I believe?"—It was Michael who thus opened the engagement. "We have

come to trouble you with a piece of business. I fear it's scarcely professional——"

"I am afraid I ought to be instructed through a solicitor," replied Gideon.

"Well, well, you shall name your own, and the whole affair can be put on a more regular footing to-morrow," replied Michael, taking a chair and motioning Pitman to do the same. "But you see we didn't know any solicitors; we did happen to know of you, and time presses."

"May I inquire, gentlemen," asked Gideon, "to whom it was I am indebted for a recommendation?"

"You may inquire," returned the lawyer, with a foolish laugh; "but I was invited not to tell you—till the thing was done."

"My uncle, no doubt," was the barrister's conclusion.

"My name is John Dickson," continued Michael; "a pretty well-known name in Ballarat; and my friend here is Mr. Ezra Thomas, of the United States of America, a wealthy manufacturer of india-rubber overshoes."

"Stop one moment till I make a note of that," said Gideon; any one might have supposed he was an old practitioner.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind my smoking a cigar?" asked Michael. He had pulled himself together for the entrance; now again there began to settle on his mind clouds of irresponsible humour and incipient slumber; and he hoped (as

so many have hoped in the like case) that a cigar would clear him.

"Oh, certainly," cried Gideon blandly. "Try one of mine; I can confidently recommend them." And he handed the box to his client.

"In case I don't make myself perfectly clear," observed the Australian, "it's perhaps best to tell you candidly that I've been lunching. It's a thing that may happen to any one."

"Oh, certainly," replied the affable barrister. "But please be under no sense of hurry. I can give you," he added, thoughtfully consulting his watch—"yes, I can give you the whole afternoon."

"The business that brings me here," resumed the Australian with gusto, "is devilish delicate, I can tell you. My friend Mr. Thomas being an American of Portuguese extraction, unacquainted with our habits, and a wealthy manufacturer of Broadwood pianos——"

"Broadwood pianos?" cried Gideon, with some surprise. "Dear me, do I understand Mr. Thomas to be a member of the firm?"

"Oh, pirated Broadwoods," returned Michael. "My friend's the American Broadwood."

"But I understood you to say," objected Gideon, "I certainly have it so in my notes—that your friend was a manufacturer of india-rubber overshoes."

"I know it's confusing at first," said the Australian, with a beaming smile. "But he—in

short, he combines the two professions. And many others besides—many, many, many others," repeated Mr. Dickson, with drunken solemnity. "Mr. Thomas's cotton-mills are one of the sights of Tallahassee; Mr. Thomas's tobacco-mills are the pride of Richmond, Va.; in short, he's one of my oldest friends, Mr. Forsyth, and I lay his case before you with emotion."

The barrister looked at Mr. Thomas and was agreeably prepossessed by his open although nervous countenance, and the simplicity and timidity of his manner. "What a people are these Americans!" he thought. "Look at this nervous, weedy, simple little bird in a low-necked shirt, and think of him wielding and directing interests so extended and seemingly incongruous! But had we not better," he observed aloud, "had we not perhaps better approach the facts?"

"Man of business, I perceive, sir!" said the Australian. "Let's approach the facts. It's a breach of promise case."

The unhappy artist was so unprepared for this view of his position that he could scarce suppress a cry.

"Dear me," said Gideon, "they are apt to be very troublesome. Tell me everything about it," he added, kindly; "if you require my assistance, conceal nothing."

"*You* tell him," said Michael, feeling, apparently, that he had done his share. "My friend will tell you all about it," he added to Gideon,

with a yawn. "Excuse my closing my eyes a moment; I've been sitting up with a sick friend."

Pitman gazed blankly about the room; rage and despair seethed in his innocent spirit; thoughts of flight, thoughts even of suicide, came and went before him; and still the barrister patiently waited, and still the artist groped in vain for any form of words, however insignificant.

"It's a breach of promise case," he said at last, in a low voice. "I—I am threatened with a breach of promise case." Here, in desperate quest of inspiration, he made a clutch at his beard; his fingers closed upon the unfamiliar smoothness of a shaven chin; and with that, hope and courage (if such expressions could ever have been appropriate in the case of Pitman) conjointly fled. He shook Michael roughly. "Wake up!" he cried, with genuine irritation in his tones. "I cannot do it, and you know I can't."

"You must excuse my friend," said Michael; "he's no hand as a narrator of stirring incident. The case is simple," he went on. "My friend is a man of very strong passions, and accustomed to a simple, patriarchal style of life. You see the thing from here: unfortunate visit to Europe, followed by unfortunate acquaintance with sham foreign count, who has a lovely daughter. Mr. Thomas was quite carried away; he proposed, he was accepted, and he wrote—

wrote in a style which I am sure he must regret to-day. If these letters are produced in court, sir, Mr. Thomas's character is gone."

"Am I to understand—" began Gideon.

"My dear sir," said the Australian, emphatically, "it isn't possible to understand unless you saw them."

"That is a painful circumstance," said Gideon; he glanced pityingly in the direction of the culprit, and observing on his countenance every mark of confusion, pityingly withdrew his eyes.

"And that would be nothing," continued Mr. Dickson, sternly, "but I wish—I wish from my heart, sir, I could say that Mr. Thomas's hands were clean. He has no excuse; for he was engaged at the time—and is still engaged—to the belle of Constantinople, Ga. My friend's conduct was unworthy of the brutes that perish."

"Ga?" repeated Gideon, inquiringly.

"A contraction in current use," said Michael. "Ga. for Georgia, in the same way as Co. for Company."

"I was aware it was sometimes so written," returned the barrister, "but not that it was so pronounced."

"Fact, I assure you," said Michael. "You now see for yourself, sir, that if this unhappy person is to be saved, some devilish sharp practice will be needed. There's money, and no desire to spare it. Mr. Thomas could write a cheque to-morrow for a hundred thousand.

And, Mr. Forsyth, there's better than money. The foreign count—Count Tarnow, he calls himself—was formerly a tobacconist in Bayswater, and passed under the humble but expressive name of Schmidt; his daughter—if she is his daughter—there's another point—make a note of that, Mr. Forsyth—his daughter at that time actually served in the shop—and she now proposes to marry a man of the eminence of Mr. Thomas! Now do you see our game? We know they contemplate a move; and we wish to forestall 'em. Down you go to Hampton Court, where they live, and threaten, or bribe, or both, until you get the letters; if you can't, God help us, we must go to court and Thomas must be exposed. I'll be done with him for one," added the unchivalrous friend.

"There seem some elements of success," said Gideon. "Was Schmidt at all known to the police?"

"We hope so," said Michael. "We have every ground to think so. Mark the neighbourhood—Bayswater!—doesn't Bayswater occur to you as very suggestive?"

For perhaps the sixth time during this remarkable interview, Gideon wondered if he were not becoming light-headed. "I suppose it's just because he has been lunching," he thought; and then added aloud, "to what figure may I go?"

"Perhaps five thousand would be enough for to-day," said Michael. "And now, sir, do not

let me detain you any longer; the afternoon wears on; there are plenty of trains to Hampton Court; and I needn't try to describe to you the impatience of my friend. Here is a five pound note for current expenses; and here is the address." And Michael began to write, paused, tore up the paper, and put the pieces in his pocket. "I will dictate," he said, "my writing is so uncertain."

Gideon took down the address, "Count Tarnow, Kurnaul Villa, Hampton Court." Then he wrote something else on a sheet of paper. "You said you had not chosen a solicitor," he said. "For a case of this sort, here is the best man in London." And he handed the paper to Michael.

"God bless me!" ejaculated Michael, as he read his own address.

"Oh, I daresay you have seen his name connected with some rather painful cases," said Gideon. "But he is himself a perfectly honest man and his capacity is recognised. And now, gentlemen, it only remains for me to ask where I shall communicate with you."

"The Langham, of course," returned Michael. "Till to-night."

"Till to-night," replied Gideon, smiling. "I suppose I may knock you up at a late hour?"

"Any hour, any hour," cried the vanishing solicitor.

"Now there's a young fellow with a head upon

his shoulders," he said to Pitman, as soon as they were in the street.

"Pitman was indistinctly heard to murmur, "Perfect fool."

"Not a bit of him," returned Michael. "He knows who's the best solicitor in London, and it's not every man can say the same. But, I say, didn't I pitch it in hot?"

Pitman returned no answer.

"Hullo!" said the lawyer, pausing, "what's wrong with the long-suffering Pitman?"

"You had no right to speak of me as you did," the artist broke out; "your language was perfectly unjustifiable; you have wounded me deeply."

"I never said a word about you," replied Michael. "I spoke of Ezra Thomas; and do please remember that there's no such party."

"It's just as hard to bear," said the artist.

But by this time they had reached the corner of the by-street; and there was the faithful shoeblack, standing by the horses' heads with a splendid assumption of dignity; and there was the piano, pricking forlorn upon the cart, while the rain beat upon its unprotected sides and trickled down its elegantly varnished legs.

The shoeblack was again put in requisition to bring five or six strong fellows from the neighbouring public-house; and the last battle of the campaign opened. It is probable that Mr. Gideon Forsyth had not yet taken his seat in

the train for Hampton Court, before Michael opened the door of the chambers, and the grunting porters deposited the Broadwood grand in the middle of the floor.

"And now," said the lawyer, after he had sent the men about their business, "one more precaution. We must leave him the key of the piano, and we must contrive that he shall find it. Let me see." And he built a square tower of cigars upon the top of the instrument, and dropped the key into the middle.

"Poor young man," said the artist, as they descended the stairs.

"He is in a devil of a position," assented Michael, dryly. "It'll brace him up."

"And that reminds me," observed the excellent Pitman, "that I fear I displayed a most ungrateful temper. I had no right, I see, to resent expressions, wounding as they were, which were in no sense directed."

"That's all right," cried Michael, getting on the cart. "Not a word more, Pitman. Very proper feeling on your part; no man of self-respect can stand by and hear his *alias* insulted."

The rain had now ceased, Michael was fairly sober, the body had been disposed of, and the friends were reconciled. The return to the mews was therefore (in comparison with previous stages of the day's adventures) quite a holiday outing; and when they had returned the cart and walked forth again from the stable-yard, unchal-

lenged and even unsuspected, Pitman drew a deep breath of joy.

"And now," he said, "we can go home."

"Pitman," said the lawyer, stopping short, "your recklessness fills me with concern. What! we have been wet through the greater part of the day, and you propose, in cold blood, to go home! No, sir—hot Scotch."

And taking his friend's arm he led him sternly toward the nearest public-house. Nor was Pitman (I regret to say) wholly unwilling. Now that peace was restored and the body gone, a certain innocent skittishness began to appear in the manners of the artist; and when he touched his steaming glass to Michael's, he giggled aloud like a venturesome school-girl at a picnic.

CHAPTER IX

GLORIOUS CONCLUSION OF MICHAEL FINSBURY'S HOLIDAY

I KNOW Michael Finsbury personally; my business—I know the awkwardness of having such a man for a lawyer—still it's an old story now, and there is such a thing as gratitude, and, in short, my legal business, although now (I am thankful to say) of quite a placid character, remains entirely in Michael's hands. But the trouble is I have no natural talent for addresses; I learn one for every man—that is friendship's offering; and the friend who subsequently changes his residence is dead to me, memory refusing to pursue him. Thus it comes about that, as I always write to Michael at his office, I cannot swear to his number in the King's Road. Of course (like my neighbours), I have been to dinner there. Of late years, since his accession to wealth, neglect of business, and election to the club, these little festivals have become common. He picks up a few fellows in the smoking-room—all men of Attic wit—myself, for instance, if he has the luck to find me disen-

gaged; a string of hansoms may be observed (by her Majesty) bowling gaily through St. James's Park; and in a quarter of an hour the party surrounds one of the best appointed boards in London.

But at the time of which we write the house in the King's Road (let us still continue to call it No. 233) was kept very quiet; when Michael entertained guests it was at the halls of Nichol or Verrey that he would convene them, and the door of his private residence remained closed against his friends. The upper story, which was sunny, was set apart for his father; the drawing-room was never opened; the dining-room was the scene of Michael's life. It is in this pleasant apartment, sheltered from the curiosity of King's Road by wire blinds, and entirely surrounded by the lawyer's unrivalled library of poetry and criminal trials, that we find him sitting down to his dinner after his holiday with Pitman. A spare old lady with very bright eyes and a mouth humorously compressed, waited upon the lawyer's needs; in every line of her countenance she betrayed the fact that she was an old retainer; in every word that fell from her lips she flaunted the glorious circumstance of a Scottish origin; and the fear with which this powerful combination fills the boldest was obviously no stranger to the bosom of our friend. The hot Scotch having somewhat warmed up the embers of the Heidsieck, it was touching to

observe the master's eagerness to pull himself together under the servant's eye; and when he remarked: "I think, Teena, I'll take a brandy and soda," he spoke like a man doubtful of his elocution, and not half certain of obedience.

"No such a thing, Mr. Michael," was the prompt return. "Clar't and water."

"Well, well, Teena, I daresay you know best," said the master. "Very fatiguing day at the office, though."

"What?" said the retainer, "ye never were near the office!"

"Oh, yes, I was though; I was repeatedly along Fleet Street," returned Michael.

"Pretty pliskies ye've been at this day!" cried the old lady, with humorous alacrity; and then: "Take care—don't break my crystal!" she cried, as the lawyer came within an ace of knocking the glasses off the table.

"And how is he keeping?" asked Michael.

"Oh, just the same, Mr. Michael, just the way he'll be till the end, worthy man!" was the reply. "But ye'll not be the first that's asked me that the day."

"No?" said the lawyer. "Who else?"

"Ay, that's a joke, too," said Teena, grimly. "A friend of yours: Mr. Morris."

"Morris! What was the little beggar doing here?" inquired Michael.

"Wantin'? To see him," replied the housekeeper, completing her meaning by a movement

of the thumb toward the upper story. "That's by his way of it; but I've an idee of my own. He tried to bribe me, Mr. Michael. Bribe—me!" she repeated, with inimitable scorn. "That's no kind of a young gentleman."

"Did he so?" said Michael. "I bet he didn't offer much."

"No more he did," replied Teena; nor could any subsequent questioning elicit from her the sum with which the thrifty leather merchant had attempted to corrupt her. "But I sent him about his business," she said, gallantly. "He'll not come here again in a hurry."

"He mustn't see my father, you know; mind that!" said Michael. "I'm not going to have any public exhibition to a little beast like him."

"No fear of me lettin' him," replied the trusty one. "But the joke is this, Mr. Michael—see, ye're upsettin' the sauce, that's a clean tablecloth—the best of the joke is that he thinks your father's dead and you're keepin' it dark."

Michael whistled. "Set a thief to catch a thief," said he.

"Exac'ly what I told him!" cried the delighted dame.

"I'll make him dance for that," said Michael.

"Couldn't ye get the law of him some way?" suggested Teena truculently.

"No, I don't think I could, and I'm quite sure I don't want to," replied Michael. "But I say, Teena, I really don't believe this claret's whole-

some; it's not a sound, reliable wine. Give us a brandy and soda, there's a good soul." Teena's face became like adamant. "Well, then," said the lawyer fretfully "I won't eat any more dinner."

"Ye can please yourself about that, Mr. Michael," said Teena, and began composedly to take away.

"I do wish Teena wasn't a faithful servant!" sighed the lawyer, as he issued into King's Road.

The rain had ceased; the wind still blew, but only with a pleasant freshness; the town, in the clear darkness of the night, glittered with street-lamps and shone with glancing rain-pools. "Come, this is better," thought the lawyer to himself, and he walked on eastward, lending a pleased ear to the wheels and the million footfalls of the city.

Near the end of the King's Road he remembered his brandy and soda, and entered a flaunting public-house. A good many persons were present, a waterman from a cab-stand, half a dozen of the chronically unemployed, a gentleman (in one corner) trying to sell æsthetic photographs out of a leather case to another and very youthful gentleman with a yellow goatee, and a pair of lovers debating some fine shade, in the other. But the centrepiece and great attraction was a little old man, in a black, ready-made surtout, which was obviously a recent purchase. On the marble table in front of him, beside a

sandwich and a glass of beer, there lay a battered forage-cap. His hand fluttered abroad with oratorical gestures; his voice, naturally shrill, was plainly tuned to the pitch of the lecture-room; and by arts, comparable to those of the Ancient Mariner, he was now holding spellbound the barmaid, the waterman, and four of the unemployed.

"I have examined all the theatres in London," he was saying; "and pacing the principal entrances, I have ascertained them to be ridiculously disproportionate to the requirements of their audiences. The doors opened the wrong way—I forget at this moment which it is, but have a note of it at home; they were frequently locked during the performance, and when the auditorium was literally thronged with English people. You have probably not had my opportunities of comparing distant lands; but I can assure you this has been long ago recognised as a mark of aristocratic government. Do you suppose, in a country really self-governed, such abuses could exist? Your own intelligence, however uncultivated, tells you they could not. Take Austria, a country even possibly more enslaved than England. I have myself conversed with one of the survivors of the Ring Theatre, and though his colloquial German was not very good, I succeeded in gathering a pretty clear idea of his opinion of the case. But what will perhaps interest you still more, here is a cutting on the subject from a Vienna newspaper,

which I will now read to you, translating as I go. You can see for yourselves; it is printed in the German character." And he held the cutting out for verification, much as a conjurer passes a trick orange along the front bench.

"Hullo, old gentleman! is this you?" said Michael, laying his hand upon the orator's shoulder.

The figure turned with a convulsion of alarm, and showed the countenance of Mr. Joseph Finsbury.

"You, Michael!" he cried. "There's no one with you, is there?"

"No," replied Michael, ordering a brandy and soda, "there's nobody with me; whom do you expect?"

"I thought of Morris or John," said the old gentleman, evidently greatly relieved.

"What the devil would I be doing with Morris or John?" cried the nephew.

"There is something in that," returned Joseph. "And I believe I can trust you. I believe you will stand by me."

"I hardly know what you mean," said the lawyer, "but if you are in need of money I am flush."

"It's not that, my dear boy," said the uncle, shaking him by the hand. "I'll tell you all about it afterward."

"All right," responded the nephew. "I stand treat, Uncle Joseph; what will you have?"

"In that case," replied the old gentleman, "I'll take another sandwich. I daresay I surprise you," he went on, "with my presence in a public-house; but the fact is I act on a sound but little known principle of my own——"

"Oh, it's better known than you suppose," said Michael, sipping his brandy and soda. "I always act on it myself when I want a drink."

The old gentleman, who was anxious to propitiate Michael, laughed a cheerless laugh. "You have such a flow of spirits," said he, "I am sure I often find it quite amusing. But regarding this principle of which I was about to speak. It is that of accommodating one's self to the manners of any land (however humble) in which our lot may be cast. Now, in France, for instance, every one goes to a café for his meals; in America to what is called a 'two-bit house'; in England the people resort to such an institution as the present for refreshment. With sandwiches, tea, and an occasional glass of bitter beer, a man can live luxuriously in London for fourteen pounds twelve shillings per annum."

"Yes, I know," returned Michael, "but that's not including clothes, washing, or boots. The whole thing, with cigars and occasional sprees, costs me over seven hundred a year."

But this was Michael's last interruption. He listened in good-humoured silence to the remainder of his uncle's lecture, which speedily branched to political reform, thence to the theory

of the weather-glass, with an illustrative account of a bora in the Adriatic; thence again to the best manner of teaching arithmetic to the deaf-and-dumb; and with that, the sandwich being then no more, *explicuit valde feliciter*. A moment later the pair issued forth on the King's Road.

"Michael," said his uncle, "the reason that I am here is because I cannot endure those nephews of mine. I find them intolerable."

"I daresay you do," assented Michael, "I never could stand them for a moment."

"They wouldn't let me speak," continued the old gentleman, bitterly; "I never was allowed to get a word in edgewise; I was shut up at once with some impertinent remark. They kept me on short allowance of pencils, when I wished to make notes of the most absorbing interest; the daily newspaper was guarded from me like a young baby from a gorilla. Now, you know me, Michael. I live for my calculations; I live for my manifold and ever-changing views of life; pens and paper and the productions of the popular press are to me as important as food and drink; and my life was growing quite intolerable when, in the confusion of that fortunate railway accident at Browndean, I made my escape. They must think me dead, and are trying to deceive the world for the chance of the tontine."

"By the way, how do you stand for money?" asked Michael kindly.

"Pecuniarily speaking, I am rich," returned the old man, with cheerfulness. "I am living at present at the rate of one hundred a year, with unlimited pens and paper; the British Museum at which to get books; and all the newspapers I choose to read. But it's extraordinary how little a man of intellectual interest requires to bother with books in a progressive age. The newspapers supply all the conclusions."

"I'll tell you what," said Michael, "come and stay with me."

"Michael," said the old gentleman, "it's very kind of you, but you scarcely understand what a peculiar position I occupy. There are some little financial complications; as a guardian my efforts were not altogether blessed; and not to put too fine a point upon the matter, I am absolutely in the power of that vile fellow, Morris."

"You should be disguised," cried Michael, eagerly. "I will lend you a pair of window-glass spectacles, and some red side-whiskers."

"I had already canvassed that idea," replied the old gentleman, "but feared to awaken remark in my unpretentious lodgings. The aristocracy, I am well aware——"

"But see here," interrupted Michael, "how do you come to have any money at all? Don't make a stranger of me, Uncle Joseph; I know all about the trust, and the hash you made of it, and the assignment you were forced to make to Morris."

Joseph narrated his dealings with the bank.

"Oh, but I say, this won't do," cried the lawyer. "You've put your foot in it. You had no right to do what you did."

"The whole thing is mine, Michael," protested the old gentleman. "I founded and nursed that business on principles entirely of my own."

"That's all very fine," said the lawyer, "but you made an assignment, you were forced to make it, too; even then your position was extremely shaky; but now, my dear sir, it means the dock."

"It isn't possible," cried Joseph; "the law cannot be so unjust as that?"

"And the cream of the thing," interrupted Michael, with a sudden shout of laughter, "the cream of the thing is this, that of course you've downed the leather business! I must say, Uncle Joseph, you have strange ideas of law, but I like your taste in humour."

"I see nothing to laugh at," observed Mr. Finsbury, tartly.

"And talking of that, has Morris any power to sign for the firm?" asked Michael.

"No one but myself," replied Joseph.

"Poor devil of a Morris. Oh, poor devil of a Morris!" cried the lawyer in delight. "And his keeping up the farce that you're at home! Oh, Morris, the Lord has delivered you into my hands! Let me see, Uncle Joseph, what do you suppose the leather business worth?"

"It *was* worth a hundred thousand," said Joseph, bitterly, "when it was in my hands. But then there came a Scotsman—it is supposed he had a certain talent—it was entirely directed to book-keeping—no accountant in London could understand a word of any of his books; and then there was Morris, who is perfectly incompetent. And now it is worth very little. Morris tried to sell it last year; and Pogram & Jarris offered only four thousand."

"I shall turn my attention to leather," said Michael, with decision.

"You?" asked Joseph. "I advise you not. There is nothing in the whole field of commerce more surprising than the fluctuations of the leather market. Its sensitiveness may be described as morbid."

"And now, Uncle Joseph, what have you done with all that money?" asked the lawyer.

"Paid it into a bank and drew twenty pounds," answered Mr. Finsbury promptly. "Why?"

"Very well," said Michael. "To-morrow I shall send down a clerk with a cheque for a hundred, and he'll draw out the original sum and return it to the Anglo-Patagonian, with some sort of explanation which I will try to invent for you. That will clear your feet, and as Morris can't touch a penny of it without forgery, it will do no harm to my little scheme."

"But what am I to do?" asked Joseph, "I cannot live upon nothing."

"Don't you hear?" returned Michael. "I send you a cheque for a hundred; which leaves you eighty to go along upon; and when that's done, apply to me again."

"I would rather not be beholden to your bounty all the same," said Joseph, biting at his white moustache. "I would rather live on my own money, since I have it."

Michael grasped his arm. "Will nothing make you believe," he cried, "that I am trying to save you from Dartmoor?"

His earnestness staggered the old man. "I must turn my attention to law," he said; "it will be a new field; for though of course I understand its general principles, I have never really applied my mind to the details, and this view of yours, for example, comes on me entirely by surprise. But you may be right, and of course at my time of life—for I am no longer young—any really long term of imprisonment would be highly prejudicial. But, my dear nephew, I have no claim on you; you have no call to support me."

"That's all right," said Michael; "I'll probably get it out of the leather business."

And having taken down the old gentleman's address, Michael left him at the corner of a street.

"What a wonderful old muddler!" he reflected, "and what a singular thing is life! I seem to be condemned to be the instrument of Providence. Let me see; what have I done to-day?

Disposed of a dead body, saved Pitman, saved my Uncle Joseph, brightened up Forsyth, and drunk a devil of a lot of most indifferent liquor. Let's top off with a visit to my cousins, and be the instrument of Providence in earnest. To-morrow I can turn my attention to leather; to-night, I'll just make it lively for 'em in a friendly spirit."

About a quarter of an hour later, as the clocks were striking eleven, the instrument of Providence descended from a hansom, and bidding the driver wait, rapped at the door of No. 16 John Street.

It was promptly opened by Morris.

"Oh, it's you, Michael," he said, carefully blocking up the narrow opening: "it's very late."

Michael without a word reached forth, grasped Morris warmly by the hand, and gave it so extreme a squeeze that the sullen householder fell back. Profiting by this movement, the lawyer obtained a footing in the lobby and marched into the dining-room, with Morris at his heels.

"Where's my Uncle Joseph?" demanded Michael, sitting down in the most comfortable chair.

"He's not been very well lately," replied Morris; "he's staying at Browndean; John is nursing him; and I am alone, as you see."

Michael smiled to himself. "I want to see him on particular business," he said.

"You can't expect to see my uncle, when you won't let me see your father," returned Morris.

"Fiddlestick," said Michael. "My father is my father; but Joseph is just as much my uncle as he's yours; and you have no right to sequestrate his person."

"I do no such thing," said Morris, doggedly. "He is not well; he is dangerously ill and nobody can see him."

"I'll tell you what, then," said Michael. "I'll make a clean breast of it. I have come down like the opossum, Morris; I have come to compromise."

Poor Morris turned as pale as death, and then a flush of wrath against the injustice of man's destiny dyed his very temples. "What do you mean?" he cried. "I don't believe a word of it!" And when Michael had assured him of his seriousness, "Well, then," he cried, with another deep flush, "I won't; so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Oho!" said Michael, queerly. "You say your uncle is dangerously ill, and you won't compromise? There's something very fishy about that."

"What do you mean?" cried Morris, hoarsely.

"I only say it's fishy," returned Michael, "that is, pertaining to the finny tribe."

"Do you mean to insinuate anything?" cried Morris, stormily, trying the high hand.

"Insinuate?" repeated Michael. "Oh, don't

let's begin to use awkward expressions! Let us drown our differences in a bottle, like two affable kinsmen. *The Two Affable Kinsmen*, sometimes attributed to Shakespeare," he added.

Morris's mind was labouring like a mill. "Does he suspect? or is this chance and stuff? Should I soap, or should I bully? Soap," he concluded. "It gains time. Well," said he aloud, and with rather a painful affectation of heartiness, "it's long since we have had an evening together, Michael; and though my habits (as you know) are very temperate, I may as well make an exception. Excuse me one moment, till I fetch a bottle of whisky from the cellar."

"No whisky for me," said Michael; "a little of the old still champagne or nothing."

For a moment Morris stood irresolute, for the wine was very valuable; the next he had quitted the room without a word. His quick mind had perceived his advantage; in thus dunning him for the cream of the cellar, Michael was playing into his hand. "One bottle?" he thought. "By George, I'll give him two! this is no moment for economy; and once the beast is drunk, it's strange if I don't wring his secret out of him."

With two bottles, accordingly, he returned. Glasses were produced, and Morris filled them with hospitable grace.

"I drink to you, cousin!" he cried gayly. "Don't spare the wine-cup in my house."

Michael drank his glass deliberately, standing

at the table; filled it again, and returned to his chair, carrying the bottle along with him.

"The spoils of war!" he said, apologetically. "The weakest goes to the wall. Science, Morris, science." Morris could think of no reply, and for an appreciable interval silence reigned. But two glasses of the still champagne produced a rapid change in Michael.

"There's a want of vivacity about you, Morris," he observed. "You may be deep; but I'll be hanged if you're vivacious!"

"What makes you think me deep?" asked Morris, with an air of pleased simplicity.

"Because you won't compromise," said the lawyer. "You're deep dog, Morris, very deep dog, not t' compromise—remarkable deep dog. And a very good glass of wine; it's the only respectable feature in the Finsbury family, this wine; rarer thing than a title—much rarer. Now, a man with glass wine like this in cellar, I wonder why won't compromise?"

"Well, *you* wouldn't compromise before, you know," said the smiling Morris. "Turn about is fair play."

"I wonder why *I* wouldn' compromise? I wonder why *you* wouldn'?" inquired Michael. "I wonder why we each think the other wouldn'? 'S quite a remarkable—remarkable problem," he added, triumphing over oral obstacles, not without obvious pride. "Wonder what we each think—don't you?"

"What do you suppose to have been my reason?" asked Morris, adroitly.

Michael looked at him and winked. "That's cool," said he. "Next thing, you'll ask me to help you out of the muddle. I know I'm emissary of Providence, but not that kind! You get out of it yourself, like Æsop and the other fellow. Must be dreadful muddle for young orphan o' forty; leather business and all!"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean," said Morris.

"Not sure I know myself," said Michael. "This is exc'lent vintage, sir—exc'lent vintage. Nothing against the tipple. Only thing; here's a valuable uncle disappeared. Now, what I want to know: where's valuable uncle?"

"I have told you: he is at Browndean," answered Morris, furtively wiping his brow, for these repeated hints began to tell upon him cruelly.

"Very easy say Brown—Browndee—no' so easy after all!" cried Michael. "Easy say anything's easy say, when you can say it. What I don' like's total disappearance of an uncle. Not business-like." And he wagged his head.

"It is all perfectly simple," returned Morris, with laborious calm. "There is no mystery. He stays at Browndean, where he got a shake in the accident."

"Ah!" said Michael, "got devil of a shake?"

"Why do you say that?" cried Morris, sharply.

"Best possible authority. Told me so yourself," said the lawyer. "But if you tell me contrary now, of course I'm bound to believe either the one story or the other. Point is—I've upset this bottle, still champagne's exc'lent thing carpet—point is, is valuable uncle dead—an'—bury?"

Morris sprang from his seat. "What's that you say?" he gasped.

"I say it's exc'lent thing carpet," replied Michael, rising. "Exc'lent thing promote healthy action of the skin. Well, it's all one, anyway. Give my love to Uncle Champagne."

"You're not going away?" said Morris.

"Awf'ly sorry, ole man. Got to sit up sick friend," said the wavering Michael.

"You shall not go till you have explained your hints," returned Morris fiercely. "What do you mean? What brought you here?"

"No offence, I trust," said the lawyer, turning round as he opened the door; "only doing my duty as shemishery of Providence."

Groping his way to the front-door, he opened it with some difficulty, and descended the steps to the hansom. The tired driver looked up as he approached, and asked where he was to go next.

Michael observed that Morris had followed him to the steps; a brilliant inspiration came to him. "Anything t' give pain," he reflected. . . . "Drive Shcotlan' Yard," he added

aloud, holding to the wheel to steady himself; "there's something devilish fishy, cabby, about those cousins. Mush' be cleared up! Drive Shcotlan' Yard."

"You don't mean that, sir," said the man, with the ready sympathy of the lower orders for an intoxicated gentleman. "I had better take you home, sir; you can go to Scotland Yard to-morrow."

"Is it as friend or as perfessional man you advise me not to go Shcotlan' Yard t'night?" inquired Michael. "All righ', never min' Shcotlan' Yard, drive Gaiety bar."

"The Gaiety bar is closed," said the man.

"Then home," said Michael, with the same cheerfulness.

"Where to, sir?"

"I don't remember, I'm sure," said Michael, entering the vehicle, "drive Shcotlan' Yard and ask."

"But you'll have a card," said the man, through the little aperture in the top, "give me your card-case."

"What imagi—imagination in a cabby!" cried the lawyer, producing his card-case, and handing it to the driver.

The man read it by the light of the lamp. "Mr. Michael Finsbury, 233 King's Road, Chelsea. Is that it, sir?"

"Right you are," cried Michael, "drive there if you can see way."

CHAPTER X

GIDEON FORSYTH AND THE BROADWOOD GRAND

THE reader has perhaps read that remarkable work, *Who Put Back the Clock?* by E. H. B., which appeared for several days upon the railway bookstalls and then vanished entirely from the face of the earth. Whether eating Time makes the chief of his diet out of old editions; whether Providence has passed a special enactment on behalf of authors; or whether these last have taken the law into their own hand, bound themselves into a dark conspiracy with a password, which I would die rather than reveal, and night after night sally forth under some vigorous leader, such as Mr. James Payn or Mr. Walter Besant, on their task of secret spoliation—certain it is, at least, that the old editions pass, giving place to new. To the proof it is believed there are now only three copies extant of *Who Put Back the Clock?*—one in the British Museum, successfully concealed by a wrong entry in the catalogue; another in one of the cellars (the cellar where the music ac-

cumulates) of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh; and a third, bound in morocco, in the possession of Gideon Forsyth. To account for the very different fate attending this third exemplar, the readiest theory is to suppose that Gideon admired the tale. How to explain that admiration might appear (to those who have perused the work) more difficult; but the weakness of a parent is extreme, and Gideon (and not his uncle, whose initials he had humorously borrowed) was the author of *Who Put Back the Clock?* He had never acknowledged it, or only to some intimate friends while it was still in proof; after its appearance and alarming failure, the modesty of the novelist had become more pressing, and the secret was now likely to be better kept than that of the authorship of *Waverley*.

A copy of the work (for the date of my tale is already yesterday) still figured in dusty solitude in the bookstall at Waterloo; and Gideon, as he passed with his ticket for Hampton Court, smiled contemptuously at the creature of his thoughts. What an idle ambition was the author's! How far beneath him was the practice of that childish art! With his hand closing on his first brief, he felt himself a man at last; and the muse who presides over the police romance, a lady presumably of French extraction, fled his neighbourhood, and returned to join the dance round the springs of Helicon, among her Grecian sisters.

Robust, practical reflection still cheered the young barrister upon his journey. Again and again he selected the little country-house in its islet of great oaks, which he was to make his future home. Like a prudent householder, he projected improvements as he passed; to one he added a stable, to another a tennis-court, a third he supplied with a becoming, rustic boat-house.

"How little a while ago," he could not but reflect, "I was a careless young dog with no thought but to be comfortable! I cared for nothing but boating and detective novels. I would have passed an old-fashioned country house with large kitchen-garden, stabling, boat-house, and spacious offices, without so much as a look, and certainly would have made no inquiry as to the drains. How a man ripens with the years!"

The intelligent reader will perceive the ravages of Miss Hazeltine. Gideon had carried Julia straight to Mr. Bloomfield's house; and that gentleman, having been led to understand she was the victim of oppression, had noisily espoused her cause. He worked himself into a fine breathing heat; in which, to a man of his temperament, action became needful.

"I do not know which is the worse," he cried, "the fraudulent old villain or the unmanly young cub. I will write to the *Pall Mall* and expose them. Nonsense, sir; they must be ex-

posed! It's a public duty. Did you not tell me the fellow was a Tory? Oh, the uncle is a radical lecturer, is he? No doubt, the uncle has been grossly wronged. But of course, as you say, that makes a change; it becomes scarce so much a public duty."

And he sought and instantly found a fresh outlet for his alacrity. Miss Hazeltine (he now perceived) must be kept out of the way, his houseboat was lying ready—he had returned but a day or two before from his usual cruise; there was no place like a houseboat for concealment; and that very morning, in the teeth of the easterly gale, Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield and Miss Julia Hazeltine had started forth on their untimely voyage. Gideon pled in vain to be allowed to join the party. "No, Gid," said his uncle. "You will be watched; you must keep away from us." Nor had the barrister ventured to contest this strange illusion; for he feared if he rubbed off any of the romance, that Mr. Bloomfield might weary of the whole affair. And his discretion was rewarded; for the Squir-radical, laying a heavy hand upon his nephew's shoulder, had added these notable expressions: "I see what you are after, Gid. But if you're going to get the girl, you have to work, sir."

These pleasing sounds had cheered the barrister all day, as he sat reading in chambers; they continued to form the ground-base of his manly musings as he was whirled to Hampton Court;

even when he landed at the station, and began to pull himself together for his delicate interview, the voice of Uncle Ned and the eyes of Julia were not forgotten.

But now it began to rain surprises: in all Hampton Court, there was no Kurnaul Villa, no Count Tarnow, and no count. This was strange; but viewed in the light of the incoherency of his instructions, not perhaps inexplicable; Mr. Dickson had been lunching, and he might have made some fatal oversight in the address. What was the thoroughly prompt, manly, and business-like step? thought Gideon; and he answered himself at once: "A telegram, very laconic." Speedily, the wires were flashing the following very important missive: "Dickson, Langham Hotel. Villa and persons both unknown here, suppose erroneous address; follow self next train. Forsyth." And at the Langham Hotel, sure enough, with a brow expressive of despatch and intellectual effort, Gideon descended not long after from a smoking hansom.

I do not suppose that Gideon will ever forget the Langham Hotel. No Count Tarnow was one thing; no John Dickson and no Ezra Thomas, quite another. How, why, and what next, danced in his bewildered brain; from every centre of what we playfully call the human intellect, incongruous messages were telegraphed; and before the hubbub of dismay had quite

subsided, the barrister found himself driving furiously for his chambers. There was at least a cave of refuge; it was at least a place to think in; and he climbed the stair, put his key in the lock and opened the door, with some approach to hope.

It was all dark within, for the night had some time fallen; but Gideon knew his room, he knew where the matches stood on the end of the chimney-piece; and he advanced boldly, and in so doing dashed himself against a heavy body, where (slightly altering the expressions of the song) no heavy body should have been. There had been nothing there when Gideon went out, he had locked the door behind him, he had found it locked on his return, no one could have entered, the furniture could not have changed its own position. And yet undeniably there was a something there. He thrust out his hands in the darkness. Yes, there was something, something large, something smooth, something cold.

"Heaven forgive me!" said Gideon, "it feels like a piano."

And the next moment he remembered the vestas in his waistcoat-pocket and had struck a light.

It was indeed a piano that met his doubtful gaze; a vast and costly instrument, stained with the rains of the afternoon and defaced with recent scratches. The light of the vesta was reflected from the varnished sides, like a star in

quiet water; and in the farther end of the room, the shadow of that strange visitor loomed bulkily and wavered on the wall.

Gideon let the match burn to his fingers, and the darkness close once more on his bewilderment. Then with trembling hands he lit the lamp and drew near. Near or far, there was no doubt of the fact: the thing was a piano. There, where by all the laws of God and man it was impossible that it should be—there the thing impudently stood. Gideon threw open the keyboard and struck a chord. Not a sound disturbed the quiet of the room. "Is there anything wrong with me?" he thought, with a pang; and drawing in a seat, obstinately persisted in his attempts to ravish silence, now with sparkling arpeggios, now with a sonata of Beethoven's which (in happier days) he knew to be one of the loudest pieces of that powerful composer. Still not a sound. He gave the Broadwood two great bangs with his clenched fists. All was still as the grave.

The young barrister started to his feet.

"I am stark-staring mad," he cried aloud, "and no one knows it but myself. God's worst curse has fallen on me."

His fingers encountered his watch-chain; instantly he had plucked forth his watch and held it to his ear. He could hear it ticking.

"I am not deaf," he said aloud. "I am only insane. My mind has quitted me for ever."

He looked uneasily about the room, and gazed with lack-lustre eyes at the chair in which Mr. Dickson had installed himself. The end of a cigar lay near it on the fender.

"No," he thought, "I don't believe that was a dream; but God knows my mind is failing rapidly. I seem to be hungry, for instance; it's probably another hallucination. Still I might try. I shall have one more good meal; I shall go to the Café Royal, and may possibly be removed from there direct to the asylum."

He wondered with morbid interest, as he descended the stairs, how he would first betray his terrible condition—would he attack a waiter? or eat glass?—and when he had mounted into a cab, he bade the man drive to Nichol's with a lurking fear that there was no such place.

The flaring, gassy entrance of the café speedily set his mind at rest; he was cheered besides to recognise his favourite waiter; his orders appeared to be coherent; the dinner, when it came, was quite a sensible meal, and he ate it with enjoyment. "Upon my word," he reflected, "I am about tempted to indulge a hope. Have I been hasty? Have I done what Robert Skill would have done?" Robert Skill (I need scarcely mention) was the name of the principal character in *Who Put Back the Clock?* It had occurred to the author as a brilliant and probable invention; to readers of a critical turn, Robert appeared scarce upon a level with his surname;

but it is the difficulty of the police romance, that the reader is always a man of such vastly greater ingenuity than the writer. In the eyes of his creator, however, Robert Skill was a word to conjure with; the thought braced and spurred him; what that brilliant creature would have done, Gideon would do also. This frame of mind is not uncommon: the distressed general, the baited divine, the hesitating author, decide severally to do what Napoleon, what St. Paul, what Shakespeare would have done; and there remains only the minor question, What is that? In Gideon's case, one thing was clear: Skill was a man of singular decision, he would have taken some step (whatever it was) at once; and the only step that Gideon could think of was to return to his chambers.

This being achieved, all further inspiration failed him, and he stood pitifully staring at the instrument of his confusion. To touch the keys again was more than he durst venture on; whether they had maintained their former silence, or responded with the tones of the last trump, it would have equally dethroned his resolution. "It may be a practical jest," he reflected, "though it seems elaborate and costly. And yet what else can it be? It *must* be a practical jest." And just then his eye fell upon a feature which seemed corroborative of that view; the pagoda of cigars which Michael had erected ere he left the chambers. "Why that?" reflected

Gideon. "It seems entirely irresponsible." And drawing near, he gingerly demolished it. "A key," he thought. "Why that? And why so conspicuously placed?" He made the circuit of the instrument, and perceived the keyhole at the back. "Aha! this is what the key is for," said he. "They wanted me to look inside. Stranger and stranger." And with that, he turned the key and raised the lid.

In what antics of agony, in what fits of flighty resolution, in what collapses of despair, Gideon consumed the night, it would be ungenerous to inquire too closely.

That trill of tiny song with which the eaves birds of London welcome the approach of day, found him limp and rumpled and bloodshot, and with a mind still vacant of resource. He rose and looked forth unrejoicingly on blinded windows, an empty street, and the grey daylight dotted with the yellow lamps. There are mornings when the city seems to awake with a sick headache; this was one of them; and still the twittering reveillé of the sparrows stirred in Gideon's spirit.

"Day here," he thought, "and I still helpless! This must come to an end." And he locked up the piano, put the key in his pocket, and set forth in quest of coffee. As he went, his mind trudged for the hundredth time a certain mill-road of terrors, misgivings, and regrets. To call in the police, to give up the body, to cover Lon-

don with handbills describing John Dickson and Ezra Thomas, to fill the papers with paragraphs, *Mysterious Occurrence in the Temple—Mr. Forsyth admitted to bail*, this was one course, an easy course, a safe course; but not, the more he reflected on it, not a pleasant one. For, was it not to publish abroad a number of singular facts about himself? A child ought to have seen through the story of these adventures, and he had gaped and swallowed it. A barrister of the least self-respect should have refused to listen to clients who came before him in a manner so irregular, and he had listened. And oh, if he had only listened; but he had gone upon their errand—he, a barrister, uninstructed even by the shadow of a solicitor—upon an errand fit only for a private detective; and alas!—and for the hundredth time the blood surged to his brow—he had taken their money! "No," said he, "the thing is as plain as St. Paul's. I shall be dishonoured! I have smashed my career for a five-pound note."

Between the possibility of being hanged in all innocence, and the certainty of a public and merited disgrace, no gentleman of spirit could long hesitate. After three gulps of that hot, snuffy, and muddy beverage, that passes on the streets of London for a decoction of the coffee berry, Gideon's mind was made up. He would do without the police. He must face the other side of the dilemma, and be Robert Skill in

earnest. What would Robert Skill have done? How does a gentleman dispose of a dead body, honestly come by? He remembered the inimitable story of the hunchback; reviewed its course, and dismissed it for a worthless guide. It was impossible to prop a corpse on the corner of Tottenham Court Road, without arousing fatal curiosity in the bosoms of the passers-by; as for lowering it down a London chimney the physical obstacles were insurmountable. To get it on board a train and drop it out, or on the top of an omnibus and drop it off, were equally out of the question. To get it on a yacht and drop it overboard, was more conceivable; but for a man of moderate means, it seemed extravagant. The hire of the yacht was in itself a consideration; the subsequent support of the whole crew (which seemed a necessary consequence) was simply not to be thought of. His uncle and the houseboat here occurred in very luminous colours to his mind. A musical composer (say, of the name of Jimson) might very well suffer, like Hogarth's musician before him, from the disturbances of London. He might very well be pressed for time to finish an opera—say the comic opera *Orange Pekoe—Orange Pekoe*, music by Jimson—"this young maëstro, one of the most promising of our recent English school"—vigorous entrance of the drums, etc.—the whole character of Jimson and his music arose in bulk before the mind of Gideon. What more likely

than Jimson's arrival with a grand piano (say, at Padwick), and his residence in a houseboat alone with the unfinished score of *Orange Pekoe?* His subsequent disappearance, leaving nothing behind but an empty piano case, it might be more difficult to account for. And yet even that was susceptible of explanation. For, suppose Jimson had gone mad over a fugal passage, and had thereupon destroyed the accomplice of his infamy, and plunged into the welcome river? What end, on the whole, more probable for a modern musician?

"By Jove, I'll do it," cried Gideon. "Jimson is the boy!"

CHAPTER XI

THE MAËSTRO JIMSON

MR. EDWARD HUGH BLOOMFIELD having announced his intention to stay in the neighbourhood of Maidenhead, what more probable than that the Maëstro Jimson should turn his mind toward Padwick? Near this pleasant river-side village, he remembered to have observed an ancient, weedy houseboat lying moored beside a tuft of willows. It had stirred in him, in his careless hours, as he pulled down the river under a more familiar name, a certain sense of the romantic; and when the nice contrivance of his story was already complete in his mind he had come near pulling it all down again, like an ungrateful clock, in order to introduce a chapter in which Robert Skill (who was always being decoyed somewhere) should be decoyed on board that lonely hulk by Lord Bellew and the American desperado Gin Sling. It was fortunate he had not done so, he reflected; since the hulk was now required for very different purposes.

Jimson, a man of inconspicuous costume, but

insinuating manners, had little difficulty in finding the hireling who had charge of the houseboat, and still less in persuading him to resign his care. The rent was almost nominal, the entry immediate, the key was exchanged against a suitable advance in money; and Jimson returned to town by the afternoon train to see about despatching his piano.

"I will be down to-morrow," he had said, reassuringly. "My opera is waited for with such impatience, you know."

And, sure enough about the hour of noon on the following day, Jimson might have been observed ascending the river-side road that goes from Padwick to Great Haverham, carrying in one hand a basket of provisions, and under the other arm a leather case containing (it is to be conjectured) the score of *Orange Pekoe.* It was October weather; the stone-grey sky was full of larks, the leaden mirror of the Thames brightened with autumnal foliage, and the fallen leaves of the chestnuts chirped under the composer's footing. There is no time of the year in England more courageous; and Jimson, though he was not without his troubles, whistled as he went.

A little above Padwick, the river lies very solitary. On the opposite shore the trees of a private park inclose the view, the chimneys of the mansion just pricking forth above their clusters; on the near side, the path is bordered by

willows. Close among these lay the houseboat, a thing so soiled by the tears of the overhanging willows, so grown upon with parasites, so decayed, so battered, so neglected, such a haunt of rats, so advertised a storehouse of rheumatic agonies, that the heart of an intending occupant might well recoil. A plank, by way of flying drawbridge, joined it to the shore. And it was a dreary moment for Jimson when he pulled this after him and found himself alone on this unwholesome fortress. He could hear the rats scuttle and flop in the abhorred interior; the key cried among the wards like a thing in pain; the sitting-room was deep in dust and smelt strong of bilge-water. It could not be called a cheerful spot, even for a composer absorbed in beloved toil; how much less for a young gentleman haunted by alarms and awaiting the arrival of a corpse!

He sat down, cleared away a piece of the table, and attacked the cold luncheon in his basket. In case of any subsequent inquiry into the fate of Jimson, it was desirable he should be little seen; in other words, that he should spend the day entirely in the house. To this end, and further to corroborate his fable, he had brought in the leather case not only writing materials, but a ream of large-size music paper, such as he considered suitable for an ambitious character like Jimson's.

"And now to work," said he, when he had satisfied his appetite. "We must leave traces of

the wretched man's activity." And he wrote in bold characters:

ORANGE PEKOE

Op. 17

J. B. JIMSON

Vocal and p. f. score

"I suppose they never do begin like this," reflected Gideon; "but then it's quite out of the question for me to tackle a full score, and Jimson was so unconventional. A dedication would be found convincing, I believe. 'Dedicated to' (let me see) 'to William Ewart Gladstone, by his obedient servant the composer.' And now some music: I had better avoid the overture, it seems to present difficulties. Let's give an air for the tenor: Key—O, something modern!—seven sharps." And he made a business-like signature across the staves, and then paused and browsed for a while on the handle of his pen. Melody, with no better inspiration than a sheet of paper, is not usually found to spring unbidden in the mind of the amateur; nor is the key of seven sharps a place of much repose to the untried. He cast away that sheet. "It will help to build up the character of Jimson," Gideon remarked; and again waited on the muse, in various keys and on divers sheets of paper, but all with results so inconsiderable that he stood

aghast. "It's very odd," thought he. "I seem to have less fancy than I thought; or this is an off-day with me; yet Jimson must leave something." And again he bent himself to the task.

Presently the penetrating chill of the houseboat began to attack the very seat of life. He desisted from his unremunerative trial; and to the audible annoyance of the rats, walked briskly up and down the cabin. Still he was cold. "This is all nonsense," said he. "I don't care about the risk, but I will not catch a catarrh. I must get out of this den."

He stepped on deck, and passing to the bow of his embarkation, looked for the first time up the river. He started. Only a few hundred yards above, another houseboat lay moored among the willows. It was very spick-and-span, an elegant canoe hung at the stern, the windows were concealed by snowy curtains; a flag floated from a staff. The more Gideon looked at it, the more there mingled with his disgust a sense of impotent surprise. It was very like his uncle's houseboat; it was exceedingly like, it was identical. But for two circumstances, he could have sworn it was the same. The first, that his uncle had gone to Maidenhead, might be explained away by that flightiness of purpose which is so common a trait among the more than usually manly. The second, however, was conclusive. It was not in the least like Mr. Bloomfield to display a banner on his floating residence; and if he ever

did, it would certainly be dyed in hues of emblematical propriety. Now the Squirradical, like the vast majority of the more manly, had drawn knowledge at the wells of Cambridge—he was wooden spoon in the year 1850; and the flag upon the houseboat streamed on the afternoon air with the colours of that seat of Toryism, that cradle of Puseyism, that home of the inexact and the effete—Oxford.

Still it was strangely like, thought Gideon.

And as he thus looked and thought, the door opened, and a young lady stepped forth on deck. The barrister dropped and fled into his cabin; it was Julia Hazeltine! Through the window he watched her draw in the canoe, get on board of it, cast off, and come dropping down stream in his direction.

"Well, all is up now," said he, and he fell on a seat.

"Good-afternoon, miss," said a voice on the water. Gideon knew it for the voice of his landlord.

"Good-afternoon," replied Julia, "but I don't know who you are; do I? Oh, yes, I do though. You are the nice man that gave us leave to sketch from the old houseboat."

Gideon's heart leaped with fear.

"That's it," returned the man. "And what I wanted to say was as you couldn't do it any more. You see I've let it."

"Let it!" cried Julia.

"Let it for a month," said the man. "Seems strange, don't it? Can't see what the party wants with it!"

"It seems very romantic of him, I think," said Julia. "What sort of a person is he?"

Julia in her canoe, the landlord in his wherry, were close alongside, and holding on by the gunwale of the houseboat; so that not a word was lost on Gideon.

"He's a music man," said the landlord, "or at least that's what he told me, miss; come down here to write an op'ra."

"Really!" cried Julia, "I never heard of anything so delightful! Why, we shall be able to slip down at night and hear him improvise! What is his name?"

"Jimson," said the man.

"Jimson?" repeated Julia, and interrogated her memory in vain. But indeed our rising school of English music boasts so many professors that we rarely hear of one till he is made a baronet. "Are you sure you have it right?"

"Made him spell it to me," replied the landlord. "J-I-M-S-O-N—Jimson; and his op'ra's called—some kind of tea."

"*Some kind of tea!*" cried the girl. "What a very singular name for an opera! What can it be about?" And Gideon heard her pretty laughter flow abroad. "We must try to get acquainted with this Mr. Jimson; I feel sure he must be nice."

"Well, miss, I'm afraid I must be going on. I've got to be at Haverham, you see."

"Oh, don't let me keep you, you kind man!" said Julia. "Good-afternoon."

"Good-afternoon to you, miss."

Gideon sat in the cabin a prey to the most harrowing thoughts. Here he was anchored to a rotting houseboat, soon to be anchored to it still more emphatically by the presence of the corpse; and here was the country buzzing about him, and young ladies already proposing pleasure parties to surround his house at night. Well, that meant the gallows; and much he cared for that. What troubled him now was Julia's indescribable levity. That girl would scrape acquaintance with anybody; she had no reserve, none of the enamel of the lady. She was familiar with a brute like his landlord; she took an immediate interest (which she lacked even the delicacy to conceal) in a creature like Jimson! He could conceive her asking Jimson to have tea with her! And it was for a girl like that that a man like Gideon—Down, manly heart!

He was interrupted by a sound that sent him whipping behind the door in a trice. Miss Hazeltine had stepped on board the houseboat. Her sketch was promising; judging from the stillness she supposed Jimson not yet come; and she had decided to seize occasion and complete the work of art. Down she sat therefore in the bow, produced her block and water-colours, and

was soon singing over (what used to be called) the ladylike accomplishment. Now and then indeed her song was interrupted, as she searched in her memory for some of the odious little receipts by means of which the game is practised—or used to be practised in the brave days of old; they say the world, and those ornaments of the world, young ladies, are become more sophisticated now; but Julia had probably studied under Pitman, and she stood firm in the old ways.

Gideon, meanwhile, stood behind the door, afraid to move, afraid to breathe, afraid to think of what must follow, racked by confinement and borne to the ground with tedium. This particular phase, he felt with gratitude, could not last for ever; whatever impended (even the gallows, he bitterly and perhaps erroneously reflected) could not fail to be a relief. To calculate cubes occurred to him as an ingenious and even profitable refuge from distressing thoughts, and he threw his manhood into that dreary exercise.

Thus, then, were these two young persons occupied, Gideon attacking the perfect number with resolution; Julia vigorously stippling incongruous colours on her block, when Providence despatched into these waters a steam-launch asthmatically panting up the Thames. All along the banks the water swelled and fell and the reeds rustled. The houseboat itself, that ancient stationary creature, became suddenly imbued with life, and rolled briskly at her moor-

ings, like a sea-going ship when she begins to smell the harbour bar. The wash had nearly died away, and the quick panting of the launch sounded already faint and far off, when Gideon was startled by a cry from Julia. Peering through the window, he beheld her staring disconsolately down stream at the fast-vanishing canoe. The barrister (whatever were his faults) displayed on this occasion a promptitude worthy of his hero, Robert Skill; with one effort of his mind he foresaw what was about to follow; with one movement of his body he dropped to the floor and crawled under the table.

Julia, on her part, was not yet alive to her position. She saw she had lost the canoe, and she looked forward with something less than avidity to her next interview with Mr. Bloomfield; but she had no idea that she was imprisoned, for she knew of the plank bridge.

She made the circuit of the house, and found the door open and the bridge withdrawn. It was plain, then, that Jimson must have come; plain, too, that he must be on board. He must be a very shy man to have suffered this invasion of his residence, and made no sign; and her courage rose higher at the thought. He must come now, she must force him from his privacy, for the plank was too heavy for her single strength; so she tapped upon the open door. Then she tapped again.

"Mr. Jimson," she cried, "Mr. Jimson! here,

come!—you *must* come, you know, sooner or later, for I can't get off without you. Oh, don't be so exceedingly silly! Oh, please come!"

Still there was no reply.

"If he *is* here he must be mad," she thought with a little fear. And the next moment she remembered he had probably gone abroad like herself in a boat. In that case, she might as well see the houseboat, and she pushed open the door and stepped in. Under the table, where he lay smothered with dust, Gideon's heart stood still.

There were the remains of Jimson's lunch. "He likes rather nice things to eat," she thought. "Oh, I am sure he is quite a delightful man. I wonder if he is as good-looking as Mr. Forsyth. Mrs. Jimson—I don't believe it sounds as nice as Mrs. Forsyth; but then 'Gideon' is so really odious! And here is some of his music too; this is delightful. *Orange Pekoe*—Oh, that's what he meant by some kind of tea." And she trilled with laughter. "*Adagio molto espressivo, sempre legato*," she read next. (For the literary part of a composer's business Gideon was well equipped.) "How very strange to have all these directions and only three or four notes! Oh, here's another with some more. *Andante patetico.*" And she began to glance over the music. "O dear me," she thought, "he must be terribly modern! It all seems discords to me. Let's try the air. It is very strange, it seems familiar." She began to sing it, and suddenly broke

off with laughter. "Why, it's *Tommy make room for your Uncle!*" she cried aloud, so that the soul of Gideon was filled with bitterness. "*Andante patelico*, indeed! The man must be a mere impostor."

And just at this moment there came a confused, scuffling sound from underneath the table; a strange note, like that of a barn-door fowl, ushered in a most explosive sneeze; the head of the sufferer was at the same time brought smartly in contact with the boards above; and the sneeze was followed by a hollow groan.

Julia fled to the door, and there, with the salutary instinct of the brave, turned and faced the danger. There was no pursuit. The sounds continued; below the table a crouching figure was indistinctly to be seen jostled by the throes of a sneezing fit; and that was all.

"Surely," thought Julia, "this is most unusual behaviour. He cannot be a man of the world!"

Meanwhile the dust of years had been disturbed by the young barrister's convulsions; and the sneezing fit was succeeded by a passionate access of coughing.

Julia began to feel a certain interest. "I am afraid you are really quite ill," she said, drawing a little nearer. "Please don't let me put you out, and do not stay under that table, Mr. Jimson. Indeed it cannot be good for you."

Mr. Jimson only answered by a distressing

cough; and the next moment the girl was on her knees and their faces had almost knocked together under the table.

"Oh, my gracious goodness!" exclaimed Miss Hazeltine, and sprang to her feet. "Mr. Forsyth gone mad!"

"I am not mad," said the gentleman ruefully, extricating himself from his position. "Dearest Miss Hazeltine, I vow to you upon my knees I am not mad!"

"You are not!" she cried, panting.

"I know," he said, "that to a superficial eye my conduct may appear unconventional."

"If you are not mad, it was no conduct at all," cried the girl, with a flash of colour, "and showed you did not care one penny for my feelings!"

"This is the very devil and all. I know—I admit that," cried Gideon, with a great effect of manly candour.

"It was abominable conduct!" said Julia, with energy.

"I know it must have shaken your esteem," said the barrister. "But, dearest Miss Hazeltine, I beg of you to hear me out; my behaviour, strange as it may seem, is not unsusceptible of explanation; and I positively cannot and will not consent to continue to try to exist without—without the esteem of one whom I admire—the moment is ill-chosen, I am well aware of that; but I repeat the expression—one whom I admire."

A touch of amusement appeared on Miss

Hazeltine's face. "Very well," said she, "come out of this dreadfully cold place, and let us sit down on deck." The barrister dolefully followed her. "Now," said she, making herself comfortable against the end of the house, "go on. I will hear you out." And then, seeing him stand before her with so much obvious disrelish to the task, she was suddenly overcome with laughter. Julia's laugh was a thing to ravish lovers; she rolled her mirthful descant with the freedom and the melody of a blackbird's song upon the river, and repeated by the echoes of the farther bank, it seemed a thing in its own place and a sound native to the open air. There was only one creature who heard it without joy, and that was her unfortunate admirer.

"Miss Hazeltine," he said, in a voice that tottered with annoyance, "I speak as your sincere well-wisher, but this can only be called levity."

Julia made great eyes at him.

"I can't withdraw the word," he said; "already the freedom with which I heard you hobnobbing with a boatman gave me exquisite pain. Then there was a want of reserve about Jimson——"

"But Jimson appears to be yourself," objected Julia.

"I am far from denying that," cried the barrister, "but you did not know it at the time. What could Jimson be to you? Who was Jimson? Miss Hazeltine, it cut me to the heart."

"Really this seems to me to be very silly," returned Julia, with severe decision. "You have behaved in the most extraordinary manner; you pretend you are able to explain your conduct, and instead of doing so you begin to attack me."

"I am well aware of that," replied Gideon. "I—I will make a clean breast of it. When you know all the circumstances you will be able to excuse me."

And sitting down beside her on the deck, he poured forth his miserable history.

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth," she cried, when he had done. "I am—so—sorry! I wish I hadn't laughed at you—only you know you really were so exceedingly funny. But I wish I hadn't, and I wouldn't either if I had only known." And she gave him her hand.

Gideon kept it in his own. "You do not think the worse of me for this?" he asked, tenderly.

"Because you have been so silly and got into such dreadful trouble? you poor boy, no!" cried Julia; and in the warmth of the moment, reached him her other hand; "you may count on me," she added.

"Really?" said Gideon.

"Really and really!" replied the girl.

"I do then, and I will," cried the young man, "I admit the moment is not well chosen; but I have no friends—to speak of."

"No more have I," said Julia. "But don't you think it's perhaps time you gave me back my hands?"

"*La ci darem la mano,*" said the barrister, "the merest moment more! I have so few friends," he added.

"I thought it was considered such a bad account of a young man to have no friends," observed Julia.

"Oh, but I have crowds of *friends!*" cried Gideon. "That's not what I mean. I feel the moment is ill chosen; but oh, Julia, if you could only see yourself!"

"Mr. Forsyth——"

"Don't call me by that beastly name!" cried the youth. "Call me Gideon!"

"Oh, never that!" from Julia. "Besides, we have known each other such a short time."

"Not at all!" protested Gideon. "We met at Bournemouth ever so long ago. I never forgot you since. Say you never forgot me. Say you never forgot me, and call me Gideon!"

"Isn't this rather—a want of reserve about Jimson?" inquired the girl.

"Oh, I know I am an ass," cried the barrister, "and I don't care a half-penny! I know I'm an ass, and you may laugh at me to your heart's delight." And as Julia's lips opened with a smile, he once more dropped into music. "There's the Land of Cherry Isle!" he sang, courting her with his eyes.

"It's like an opera," said Julia, rather faintly.

"What should it be?" said Gideon. "Am I not Jimson? It would be strange if I did not serenade my love. Oh, yes, I mean the word, my Julia; and I mean to win you. I am in dreadful trouble, and I have not a penny of my own, and I have cut the silliest figure, and yet I mean to win you, Julia. Look at me, if you can, and tell me no!"

She looked at him; and whatever her eyes may have told him, it is to be supposed he took a pleasure in the message, for he read it a long while.

"And Uncle Ned will give us some money to go on upon in the meanwhile," he said, at last.

"Well, I call that cool!" said a cheerful voice at his elbow.

Gideon and Julia sprang apart with wonderful alacrity; the latter annoyed to observe that although they had never moved since they sat down, they were now quite close together; both presenting faces of a very heightened colour to the eyes of Mr. Edward Hugh Bloomfield. That gentleman, coming up the river in his boat, had captured the truant canoe, and divining what had happened, had thought to steal a march on Miss Hazeltine at her sketch. He had unexpectedly brought down two birds with one stone; and as he looked upon the pair of flushed and breathless culprits, the pleasant human instinct of the match-maker softened his heart.

"Well, I call that cool," he repeated; "you seem to count very securely upon Uncle Ned. But look here, Gid, I thought I had told you to keep away?"

"To keep away from Maidenhead," replied Gid. "But how should I expect to find you here?"

"There is something in that," Mr. Bloomfield admitted. "You see I thought it better that even you should be ignorant of my address; those rascals, the Finsburys, would have wormed it out of you. And just to put them off the scent I hoisted these abominable colours. But that is not all, Gid; you promised me to work, and here I find you playing the fool at Padwick."

"Please, Mr. Bloomfield, you must not be hard on Mr. Forsyth," said Julia. "Poor boy, he is in dreadful straits."

"What's this, Gid?" inquired the uncle. "Have you been fighting? or is it a bill?"

These, in the opinion of the Squirradical, were the two misfortunes incident to gentlemen; and indeed both were culled from his own career. He had once put his name (as a matter of form) on a friend's paper; it had cost him a cool thousand; and the friend had gone about with the fear of death upon him ever since, and never turned a corner without scouting in front of him for Mr. Bloomfield and the oaken staff. As for fighting, the Squirradical was always on the brink of it; and once, when (in the character of

president of a radical club) he had cleared out the hall of his opponents, things had gone even further. Mr. Holtum, the conservative candidate, who lay so long on the bed of sickness, was prepared to swear to Mr. Bloomfield. "I will swear to it in any court—it was the hand of that brute that struck me down," he was reported to have said; and when he was thought to be sinking, it was known that he had made an *ante-mortem* statement in that sense. It was a cheerful day for the Squirradical when Holtum was restored to his brewery.

"It's much worse than that," said Gideon, "a combination of circumstances really providentially unjust—a—in fact, a syndicate of murderers seem to have perceived my latent ability to rid them of the traces of their crime. It's a legal study, after all, you see!" And with these words, Gideon, for the second time that day, began to describe the adventures of the Broadwood Grand.

"I must write to *The Times*," cried Mr. Bloomfield.

"Do you want to get me disbarred?" asked Gideon.

"Disbarred! Come, it can't be as bad as that," said his uncle. "It's a good honest, liberal government that's in, and they would certainly move at my request. Thank God, the days of Tory jobbery are at an end."

"It wouldn't do, Uncle Ned," said Gideon.

"But you're not mad enough," cried Mr. Bloomfield, "to persist in trying to dispose of it yourself?"

"There is no other path open to me," said Gideon.

"It's not common sense, and I will not hear of it," cried Mr. Bloomfield. "I command you, positively, Gid, to desist from this criminal interference."

"Very well, then, I hand it over to you," said Gideon, "and you can do what you like with the dead body."

"God forbid!" ejaculated the president of the Radical Club, "I'll have nothing to do with it."

"Then you must allow me to do the best I can," returned his nephew. "Believe me, I have a distinct talent for this sort of difficulty."

"We might forward it to that pest-house, the Conservative Club," observed Mr. Bloomfield. "It might damage them in the eyes of their constituents; and it could be profitably worked up in the local journal."

"If you see any political capital in the thing," said Gideon, "you may have it for me."

"No, no, Gid—no, no, I thought *you* might. I will have no hand in the thing. On reflection, it's highly undesirable that either I or Miss Hazeltine should linger here. We might be observed," said the president, looking up and down

the river; "and in my public position the consequences would be painful for the party. And at any rate, it's dinner time."

"What?" cried Gideon, plunging for his watch. "And so it is! Great heaven, the piano should have been here hours ago!"

Mr. Bloomfield was clambering back into his boat; but at these words he paused.

"I saw it arrive myself at the station; I hired a carrier man; he had a round to make, but he was to be here by four at the latest," cried the barrister. "No doubt the piano is open, and the body found."

"You must fly at once," cried Mr. Bloomfield, "it's the only manly step."

"But suppose it's all right?" wailed Gideon. "Suppose the piano comes, and I am not here to receive it? I shall have hanged myself by my cowardice. No, Uncle Ned, inquiries must be made in Padwick; I dare not go, of course; but you may, you could hang about the police office, don't you see?"

"No, Gid—no, my dear nephew," said Mr. Bloomfield, with the voice of one on the rack. "I regard you with the most sacred affection; and I thank God I am an Englishman—and all that. But not—not the police, Gid."

"Then you desert me?" said Gideon. "Say it plainly."

"Far from it! far from it!" protested Mr. Bloomfield. "I only propose caution. Common

sense, Gid, should always be an Englishman's guide."

"Will you let me speak?" said Julia. "I think Gideon had better leave this dreadful houseboat and wait among the willows over there. If the piano comes, then he could step out and take it in; and if the police come, he could slip into our houseboat, and there needn't be any more Jimson at all. He could go to bed, and we could burn his clothes (couldn't we?) in the steam-launch; and then really it seems as if it would be all right. Mr. Bloomfield is so respectable, you know, and such a leading character, it would be quite impossible even to fancy that he could be mixed up with it."

"This young lady has strong common sense," said the Squirradical.

"Oh, I don't think I'm at all a fool," said Julia, with conviction.

"But what if neither of them come?" asked Gideon; "what shall I do then?"

"Why, then," said she, "you had better go down to the village after dark; and I can go with you, and then I am sure you could never be suspected; and even if you were, I could tell them it was altogether a mistake."

"I will not permit that—I will not suffer Miss Hazeltine to go," cried Mr. Bloomfield.

"Why?" asked Julia.

Mr. Bloomfield had not the least desire to tell her why, for it was simply a craven fear of being

drawn himself into the imbroglio; but with the usual tactics of a man who is ashamed of himself, he took the high hand. "God forbid, my dear Miss Hazeltine, that I should dictate to a lady on the question of propriety——" he began.

"Oh, is that all?" interrupted Julia. "Then we must go all three."

"Caught!" thought the Squirradical.

CHAPTER XII

POSITIVELY THE LAST APPEARANCE OF THE BROADWOOD GRAND

ENGLAND is supposed to be unmusical; but without dwelling on the patronage extended to the organ-grinder, without seeking to found any argument on the prevalence of the Jew's trump, there is surely one instrument that may be said to be national in the fullest acceptance of the word. The herdboy in the broom, already musical in the days of Father Chaucer, startles (and perhaps pains) the lark with this exiguous pipe; and in the hands of the skilled bricklayer,

"The thing becomes a trumpet, whence he blows"

(as a general rule) either *The British Grenadiers*, or *Cherry Ripe*. The latter air is indeed the shibboleth and diploma piece of the penny whistler; I hazard a guess it was originally composed for this instrument. It is singular enough that a man should be able to gain a livelihood,

or even to tide over a period of unemployment, by the display of his proficiency upon the penny whistle; still more so, that the professional should almost invariably confine himself to *Cherry Ripe.* But indeed, singularities surround the subject, thick like blackberries. Why, for instance, should the pipe be called a penny whistle? I think no one ever bought it for a penny. Why should the alternative name be tin whistle? I am grossly deceived if it be made of tin. Lastly, in what deaf catacomb, in what earless desert, does the beginner pass the excruciating interval of his apprenticeship? We have all heard people learning the piano, the fiddle, and the cornet; but the young of the penny whistler (like that of the salmon) is occult from observation; he is never heard until proficient; and Providence (perhaps alarmed by the works of Mr. Mallock) defends human hearing from his first attempts upon the upper octave.

A really noteworthy thing was taking place in a green lane, not far from Padwick. On the bench of a carrier's cart there sat a tow-headed, lanky, modest-looking youth; the reins were on his lap; the whip lay behind him in the interior of the cart; the horse proceeded without guidance or encouragement; the carrier (or the carrier's man) wrapt into a higher sphere than that of his daily occupations, his looks dwelling on the skies, devoted himself wholly to a brand-new D penny whistle, whence he diffidently endeav-

oured to elicit that pleasing melody *The Ploughboy*. To any observant person who should have chanced to saunter in that lane, the hour would have been thrilling. "Here at last," he would have said, "is the beginner."

The tow-headed youth (whose name was Harker) had just encored himself for the nineteenth time, when he was struck into the extreme of confusion by the discovery that he was not alone.

"There you have it!" cried a manly voice from the side of the road. "That's as good as I want to hear. Perhaps a leetle oilier in the run," the voice suggested, with meditative gusto. "Give it us again."

Harker glanced, from the depths of his humiliation, at the speaker. He beheld a powerful, sun-brown, clean-shaven fellow, about forty years of age, striding beside the cart with a non-commissioned military bearing, and (as he strode) spinning in the air a cane. The fellow's clothes were very bad, but he looked clean and self-reliant.

"I'm only a beginner," gasped the blushing Harker, "I didn't think anybody could hear me."

"Well, I like that!" returned the other. "You're a pretty old beginner. Come, I'll give you a lead myself. Give us a seat here beside you."

The next moment the military gentleman was perched on the cart, pipe in hand. He gave the instrument a knowing rattle on the shaft, mouth-

ed it, appeared to commune for a moment with the muse, and dashed into *The Girl I left behind Me.* He was a great, rather than a fine, performer; he lacked the bird-like richness; he could scarce have extracted all the honey out of *Cherry Ripe;* he did not fear—he even ostentatiously displayed and seemed to revel in the shrillness of the instrument; but in fire, speed, precision, evenness, and fluency; in linked agility of *jimmy* —a technical expression, by your leave, answering to *warblers* on the bagpipe; and perhaps, above all, in that inspiring side-glance of the eye, with which he followed the effect and (as by a human appeal) eked out the insufficiency of his performance: in these, the fellow stood without a rival. Harker listened: *The Girl I left behind Me* filled him with despair; *The Soldier's Joy* carried him beyond jealousy into generous enthusiasm.

"Turn about," said the military gentleman, offering the pipe.

"Oh, not after you!" cried Harker; "you're a professional."

"No," said his companion; "an amatyure like yourself. That's one style of play, yours is the other, and I like it best. But I began when I was a boy, you see, before my taste was formed. When you're my age you'll play that thing like a cornet-à-piston. Give us that air again; how does it go?" and he affected to endeavour to recall *The Ploughboy.*

A timid, insane hope sprang in the breast of Harker. Was it possible? Was there something in his playing? It had, indeed, seemed to him at times as if he got a kind of a richness out of it. Was he a genius? Meantime the military gentleman stumbled over the air.

"No," said the unhappy Harker, "that's not quite it. It goes this way—just to show you."

And, taking the pipe between his lips, he sealed his doom. When he had played the air, and then a second time, and a third; when the military gentleman had tried it once more, and once more failed; when it became clear to Harker that he, the blushing débutant, was actually giving a lesson to this full-grown flutist—and the flutist under his care was not very brilliantly progressing—how am I to tell what floods of glory brightened the autumnal countryside; how, unless the reader were an amateur himself, describe the heights of idiotic vanity to which the carrier climbed? One significant fact shall paint the situation: thenceforth it was Harker who played, and the military gentleman listened and approved.

As he listened, however, he did not forget the habit of soldierly precaution, looking both behind and before. He looked behind and computed the value of the carrier's load, divining the contents of the brown paper parcels and the portly hamper, and briefly setting down the grand piano in the brand new piano-case as

"difficult to get rid of." He looked before, and spied at the corner of the green lane a little country public-house embowered in roses. "I'll have a shy at it," concluded the military gentleman, and roundly proposed a glass.

"Well, I'm not a drinking man," said Harker.

"Look here, now," cut in the other, "I'll tell you who I am: I'm Colour-sergeant Brand of the Blankth. That'll tell you if I'm a drinking man or not." It might and it might not, thus a Greek chorus would have intervened, and gone on to point out how very far it fell short of telling why the sergeant was tramping a country lane in tatters; or even to argue that he must have pretermitted some while ago his labours for the general defence, and (in the interval) possibly turned his attention to oakum. But there was no Greek chorus present; and the man of war went on to contend that drinking was one thing and a friendly glass another.

In the Blue Lion, which was the name of the country public-house, Colour-sergeant Brand introduced his new friend, Mr. Harker, to a number of ingenious mixtures, calculated to prevent the approaches of intoxication. These he explained to be "rekisite" in the service, so that a self-respecting officer should always appear upon parade in a condition honourable to his corps. The most efficacious of these devices was to lace a pint of mild ale with twopence-worth of London gin. I am pleased to hand in this recipe

to the discerning reader, who may find it useful even in civil station; for its effect upon Mr. Harker was revolutionary. He must be helped on board his own wagon, where he proceeded to display a spirit entirely given over to mirth and music, alternately hooting with laughter, to which the sergeant hastened to bear chorus, and incoherently tootling on the pipe. The man of war, meantime, unostentatiously possessed himself of the reins. It was plain he had a taste for the secluded beauties of an English landscape; for the cart, although it wandered under his guidance for some time, was never observed to issue on the dusty highway, journeying between hedge and ditch, and for the most part under overhanging boughs. It was plain, besides, he had an eye to the true interests of Mr. Harker; for though the cart drew up more than once at the doors of public-houses, it was only the sergeant who set foot to ground, and being equipped himself with a quart bottle, once more proceeded on his rural drive.

To give any idea of the complexity of the sergeant's course, a map of that part of Middlesex would be required, and my publisher is averse from the expense. Suffice it, that a little after the night had closed, the cart was brought to a standstill in a woody road; where the sergeant lifted from among the parcels, and tenderly deposited upon the wayside, the inanimate form of Harker.

"If you come-to before daylight," thought the sergeant, "I shall be surprised for one."

From the various pockets of the slumbering carrier, he gently collected the sum of seventeen shillings and eightpence sterling; and getting once more into the cart, drove thoughtfully away.

"If I was exactly sure of where I was, it would be a good job," he reflected. "Anyway, here's a corner."

He turned it, and found himself upon the river-side. A little above him the lights of a house-boat shone cheerfully; and already close at hand, so close that it was impossible to avoid their notice, three persons, a lady and two gentlemen, were deliberately drawing near. The sergeant put his trust in the convenient darkness of the night, and drove on to meet them. One of the gentlemen, who was of a portly figure, walked in the midst of the fairway and presently held up a staff by way of signal.

"My man, have you seen anything of a carrier's cart?" he cried.

Dark as it was, it seemed to the sergeant as though the slimmer of the two gentlemen had made a motion to prevent the other speaking, and (finding himself too late) had skipped aside with some alacrity. At another season, Sergeant Brand would have paid more attention to the fact; but he was then immersed in the perils of his own predicament.

"A carrier's cart?" said he, with a perceptible uncertainty of voice. "No, sir."

"Ah!" said the portly gentleman, and stood aside to let the sergeant pass. The lady appeared to bend forward and study the cart with every mark of sharpened curiosity; the slimmer gentleman still keeping in the rear.

"I wonder what the devil they would be at," thought Sergeant Brand; and looking fearfully back, he saw the trio standing together in the midst of the way, like folk consulting. The bravest of military heroes are not always equal to themselves as to their reputation; and fear, on some singular provocation, will find a lodgment in the most unfamiliar bosom. The word "detective" might have been heard to gurgle in the sergeant's throat; and vigorously applying the whip, he fled up the river-side road to Great Haverham, at the gallop of the carrier's horse. The lights of the houseboat flashed upon the flying waggon as it passed; the beat of hoofs and the rattle of the vehicle gradually coalesced and died away; and presently to the trio on the river-side, silence had redescended.

"It's the most extraordinary thing," cried the slimmer of the two gentlemen, "but that's the cart!"

"And I know I saw a piano," said the girl.

"Oh, it's the cart, certainly; and the extraordinary thing is, it's not the man," added the first.

"It must be the man, Gid, it must be," said the portly one.

"Well, then, why is he running away?" asked Gideon.

"His horse bolted, I suppose," said the Squirradical.

"Nonsense! I heard the whip going like a flail," said Gideon. "It simply defies the human reason."

"I'll tell you," broke in the girl, "he came round that corner. Suppose we went and—what do thy call it in books?—followed his trail? There may be a house there, or somebody who saw him, or something."

"Well, suppose we did, for the fun of the thing," said Gideon.

The fun of the thing (it would appear) consisted in the extremely close juxtaposition of himself and Miss Hazeltine. To Uncle Ned, who was excluded from these simple pleasures, the excursion appeared hopeless from the first; and when a fresh perspective of darkness opened up, dimly contained between park palings on the one side and a hedge and ditch upon the other, the whole without the smallest signal of human habitation, the Squirradical drew up.

"This is a wild-goose chase," said he.

With the cessation of the footfalls, another sound smote upon their ears.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Julia.

"I can't think," said Gideon.

The Squirradical had his stick presented like a sword. "Gid," he began, "Gid, I——"

"Oh, Mr. Forsyth!" cried the girl. "Oh! don't go forward, you don't know what it might be—it might be something perfectly horrid."

"It may be the devil itself," said Gideon, disengaging himself, "but I am going to see it."

"Don't be rash, Gid," cried his uncle.

The barrister drew near to the sound, which was certainly of a portentous character. In quality, it appeared to blend the strains of the cow, the fog-horn, and the mosquito; and the startling manner of its enunciation added incalculably to its terrors. A dark object not unlike the human form divine, appeared on the brink of the ditch.

"It's a man," said Gideon, "it's only a man; he seems to be asleep and snoring. Hullo," he added, a moment after, "there must be something wrong with him, he won't waken."

Gideon produced his vestas, struck one, and by its light recognised the tow-head of Harker.

"This is the man," said he, "as drunk as Belial. I see the whole story"; and to his two companions, who had now ventured to rejoin him, he set forth a theory of the divorce between the carrier and his cart, which was not unlike the truth.

"Drunken brute!" said Uncle Ned, "let's get him to a pump and give him what he deserves."

"Not at all!" said Gideon. "It is highly un-

desirable he should see us together; and really, do you know, I am very much obliged to him, for this is about the luckiest thing that could have possibly occurred. It seems to me—Uncle Ned, I declare to heaven it seems to me I'm clear of it!"

"Clear of what?" asked the Squirradical.

"The whole affair!" cried Gideon. "That man has been ass enough to steal the cart and the dead body; what he hopes to do with it, I neither know nor care. My hands are free, Jimson ceases; down with Jimson. Shake hands with me, Uncle Ned—Julia, darling girl, Julia, I——"

"Gideon, Gideon!" said his uncle.

"Oh, it's all right, uncle, when we're going to be married so soon," said Gideon. "You know you said so yourself in the houseboat."

"Did I?" said Uncle Ned, "I am certain I said no such thing."

"Appeal to him, tell him he did, get on his soft side," cried Gideon. "He's a real brick if you get on his soft side."

"Dear Mr. Bloomfield," said Julia, "I know Gideon will be such a very good boy, and he has promised me to do such a lot of law, and I will see that he does it too. And you know it is so very steadying to young men, everybody admits that; though, of course, I know I have no money, Mr. Bloomfield," she added.

"My dear young lady, as this rapscallion told you to-day on the boat, Uncle Ned has plenty,"

said the Squirradical, "and I can never forget that you have been shamefully defrauded. So as there's nobody looking, you had better give your Uncle Ned a kiss. There, you rogue," resumed Mr. Bloomfield, when the ceremony had been daintily performed, "this very pretty young lady is yours, and a vast deal more than you deserve. But now let us get back to the houseboat, get up steam on the launch, and away back to town."

"That's the thing!" cried Gideon; "and tomorrow, there will be no houseboat, and no Jimson, and no carrier's cart, and no piano; and when Harker awakes on the ditch side, he may tell himself the whole affair has been a dream."

"Aha!" said Uncle Ned, "but there's another man who will have a different awakening. That fellow in the cart will find he has been too clever by half."

"Uncle Ned and Julia," said Gideon, "I am as happy as the King of Tartary, my heart is like a threepenny-bit, my heels are like feathers; I am out of all my troubles, Julia's hand is in mine. Is this a time for anything but handsome sentiments? Why, there's not room in me for anything that's not angelic! And when I think of that poor unhappy devil in the cart, I stand here in the night and cry with a single heart—God help him!"

"Amen," said Uncle Ned.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIBULATIONS OF MORRIS: PART THE SECOND

IN a really polite age of literature, I would have scorned to cast my eye again on the contortions of Morris. But the study is in the spirit of the day; it presents, besides, features of a high, almost a repulsive, morality; and if it should prove the means of preventing any respectable and inexperienced gentleman from plunging light-heartedly into crime, even political crime, this work will not have been penned in vain.

He rose on the morrow of his night with Michael, rose from the leaden slumber of distress, to find his hand tremulous, his eyes closed with rheum, his throat parched, and his digestion obviously paralysed. "Lord knows it's not from eating!" Morris thought; and as he dressed he reconsidered his position under several heads. Nothing will so well depict the troubled seas in which he was now voyaging as a review of these various anxieties. I have thrown them (for the reader's convenience)

into a certain order; but in the mind of one poor human equal, they whirled together like the dust of hurricanes. With the same obliging preoccupation, I have put a name to each of his distresses; and it will be observed with pity that every individual item would have graced and commended the cover of a railway novel.

Anxiety the First: *Where is the Body? or, the Mystery of Bent Pitman.* It was now manifestly plain that Bent Pitman (as was to be looked for from his ominous appellation) belonged to the darker order of the criminal class. An honest man would not have cashed the bill; a humane man would not have accepted in silence the tragic contents of the water-butt; a man, who was not already up to the hilts in gore, would have lacked the means of secretly disposing them. This process of reasoning left a horrid image of the monster, Pitman. Doubtless he had long ago disposed of the body—dropping it through a trap-door in his back kitchen, Morris supposed, with some hazy recollection of a picture in a penny dreadful; and doubtless the man now lived in wanton splendour on the proceeds of the bill. So far, all was peace. But with the profligate habits of a man like Bent Pitman (who was no doubt a hunch-back in the bargain), eight hundred pounds could be easily melted in a week. When they were gone, what would he be likely to do next? A hell-like voice in Morris's own bosom gave the answer: "Blackmail me."

Anxiety the Second: *The Fraud of the Tontine; or, Is my Uncle Dead?* This, on which all Morris's hopes depended, was yet a question. He had tried to bully Teena; he had tried to bribe her; and nothing came of it. He had his moral conviction still; but you cannot blackmail a sharp lawyer on a moral conviction. And besides, since his interview with Michael, the idea wore a less attractive countenance. Was Michael the man to be blackmailed? and was Morris the man to do it? Grave considerations. "It's not that I am afraid of him," Morris so far condescended to reassure himself; "but I must be very certain of my ground, and the deuce of it is, I see no way. How unlike is life to novels! I wouldn't have even begun this business in a novel, but what I'd have met a dark, slouching fellow in the Oxford Road, who'd have become my accomplice, and known all about how to do it, and probably broken into Michael's house at night and found nothing but a wax-work image; and then blackmailed or murdered me. But here, in real life, I might walk the streets till I dropped dead, and none of the criminal classes would look near me. Though, to be sure, there is always Pitman," he added, thoughtfully.

Anxiety the Third: *The Cottage at Browndean; or, The Underpaid Accomplice.* For he had an accomplice, and that accomplice was blooming unseen in a damp cottage in Hampshire with

empty pockets. What could be done about that? He really ought to have sent him something; if it was only a post-office order for five-bob, enough to prove that he was kept in mind, enough to keep him in hope, beer, and tobacco. "But what would you have?" thought Morris; and ruefully poured into his hand a half-crown, a florin, and eightpence in small change. For a man in Morris's position, at war with all society, and conducting, with the hand of inexperience, a widely ramified intrigue, the sum was already a derision. John would have to be doing; no mistake of that. "But then," asked the hell-like voice, "how long is John likely to stand it?"

Anxiety the Fourth: *The Leather Business; or, The Shutters at Last: a Tale of the City.* On this head, Morris had no news. He had not yet dared to visit the family concern; yet he knew he must delay no longer, and if anything had been wanted to sharpen this conviction, Michael's references of the night before rang ambiguously in his ear. Well and good. To visit the city might be indispensable; but what was he to do when he was there? He had no right to sign in his own name; and with all the will in the world, he seemed to lack the art of signing with his uncle's. Under these circumstances, Morris could do nothing to procrastinate the crash; and when it came, when prying eyes began to be applied to every joint of his behaviour, two questions could not fail to be addressed, sooner or

later, to a speechless and perspiring insolvent. Where is Mr. Joseph Finsbury? and how about your visit to the bank? Questions, how easy to put!—ye gods, how impossible to answer! The man to whom they should be addressed went certainly to gaol, and—eh! what was this?—possibly to the gallows. Morris was trying to shave when this idea struck him, and he laid the razor down. Here (in Michael's words) was the total disappearance of a valuable uncle; here was a time of inexplicable conduct on the part of a nephew who had been in bad blood with the old man any time these seven years; what a chance for a judicial blunder! "But, no," thought Morris, "they cannot, they dare not, make it murder. Not that. But honestly, and speaking as a man to a man, I don't see any other crime in the calendar (except arson) that I don't seem somehow to have committed. And yet I'm a perfectly respectable man, and wished nothing but my due. Law is a pretty business."

With this conclusion firmly seated in his mind, Morris Finsbury descended to the hall of the house in John Street, still half-shaven. There was a letter in the box; he knew the handwriting: John at last.

"Well, I think I might have been spared this," he said bitterly, and tore it open.

"Dear Morris," it ran, "what the dickens do you mean by it? I'm in an awful hole down here; I have to go on tick, and the parties on the spot don't cotton to the idea; they couldn't, be-

cause it is so plain I'm in a stait of Destitution. I've no bed-clothes, think of that, I must have coins, the hole thing's a Mockry, I won't stand it, nobody would. I would have come away before, only I have no money for the railway fair. Don't be a lunatic, Morris, you don't seem to understand my dredful situation. I have to get the stamp on tick. A fact. Ever your affte. Brother, J. Finsbury."

"Can't even spell!" Morris reflected, as he crammed the letter in his pocket, and left the house. "What can I do for him? I have to go to the expense of a barber, I'm so shattered! How can I send anybody coins? It's hard lines, I daresay; but does he think I'm living on hot muffins? One comfort," was his grim reflection, "he can't cut and run: he's got to stay, he's as helpless as the dead." And then he broke forth again: "Complains, does he? and he's never even heard of Bent Pitman! If he had what I have on my mind, he might complain with a good grace."

But these were not honest arguments, or not wholly honest; there was a struggle in the mind of Morris; he could not disguise from himself that his brother John was miserably situated at Browndean, without news, without money, without bed-clothes, without society or any entertainment; and by the time he had been shaved and picked a hasty breakfast at a coffee-tavern, Morris had arrived at a compromise.

"Poor Johnny," he said to himself, "he's in an awful box. I can't send him coins; but I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll send him the *Pink Un*,

it'll cheer John up; and besides, it'll do his credit good getting anything by post."

Accordingly, on his way to the leather business, whither he proceeded (according to his thrifty habit) on foot, Morris purchased and despatched a single copy of that enlivening periodical, to which (in a sudden pang of remorse) he added at random the *Athenæum*, the *Revivalist*, and the *Penny Pictorial Weekly*. So there was John set up with literature, and Morris had laid balm upon his conscience.

As if to reward him, he was received in his place of business with good news. Orders were pouring in; there was a run on some of the back stock, and the figure had gone up; even the manager appeared elated. As for Morris, who had almost forgotten the meaning of good news, he longed to sob like a little child; he could have caught the manager (a pallid man with startled eyebrows) to his bosom; he could have found it in his generosity to give a check (for a small sum) to every clerk in the counting-house. As he sat and opened his letters, a chorus of airy vocalists sang in his brain, to most exquisite music, "This old concern may be profitable yet, profitable yet, profitable yet."

To him, in this sunny moment of relief, enter a Mr. Rodgerson, a creditor, but not one who was expected to be pressing, for his connection with the firm was old and regular.

"Oh, Finsbury," said he, not without embar-

rassment, "it's of course only fair to let you know—the fact is, money is a trifle tight—I have some paper out—for that matter, every one's complaining—and in short——"

"It has never been our habit, Rodgerson," said Morris, turning pale. "But give me time to turn round, and I'll see what I can do; I daresay we can let you have something on account."

"Well, that's just where it is," replied Rodgerson. "I was tempted, I've let the credit out of my hands."

"Out of your hands?" repeated Morris. "That's playing rather fast and loose with us, Mr. Rodgerson."

"Well, I got cent. for cent. for it," said the other, "on the nail, in a certified cheque."

"Cent. for cent.!" cried Morris. "Why, that's something like thirty per cent. bonus; a singular thing! Who's the party?"

"Don't know the man," was the reply. "Name of Moss."

"A Jew," Morris reflected, when his visitor was gone. And what could a Jew want with a claim of—he verified the amount in the books—a claim of three five eight, nineteen, ten, against the house of Finsbury? And why should he pay cent. for cent.? The figure proved the loyalty of Rodgerson, even Morris admitted that. But it proved unfortunately something else: the eagerness of Moss. The claim must have been

wanted instantly, for that day, for that morning even. Why? The mystery of Moss promised to be a fit pendant to the mystery of Pitman. "And just when all was looking well, too!" cried Morris, smiting his hand upon the desk. And almost at the same moment, Mr. Moss was announced.

Mr. Moss was a radiant Hebrew, brutally handsome and offensively polite. He was acting (it appeared) for a third party; he understood nothing of the circumstances; his client desired to have his position regularised; but he would accept an antedated cheque—antedated by two months, if Mr. Finsbury chose.

"But I don't understand this," said Morris. "What made you pay cent. per cent. for it to-day?"

Mr. Moss had no idea; only his orders.

"The whole thing is thoroughly irregular," said Morris. "It is not the custom of the trade to settle at this time of the year. What are your instructions if I refuse?"

"I am to see Mr. Joseph Finsbury, the head of the firm," said Mr. Moss. "I was directed to insist on that; it was implied you had no status here—the expressions are not mine."

"You cannot see Mr. Joseph; he is unwell," said Morris.

"In that case I was to place the matter in the hands of a lawyer—let me see—" said Mr. Moss, opening a pocket-book, with perhaps suspicious

care, at the right place—"Yes—of Mr. Michael Finsbury. A relation, perhaps? In that case, I presume, the matter will be pleasantly arranged."

To pass into the hands of Michael was too much for Morris; he struck his colours: a cheque at two months was nothing, after all. In two months he would probably he dead, or in a gaol at any rate. He bade the manager give Mr. Moss a chair and the paper. "I'm going over to get a cheque signed by Mr. Finsbury," said he, "who is lying ill at John Street."

A cab there and a cab back, here were inroads on his wretched capital! He counted the cost; when he was done with Mr. Moss, he would be left with twelvepence-half-penny in the world. What was even worse, he had now been forced to bring his uncle up to Bloomsbury. "No use for poor Johnny in Hampshire now," he reflected. "And how the farce is to be kept up completely passes me. At Browndean it was just possible; in Bloomsbury it seems beyond human ingenuity—though I suppose it's what Michael does. But then he has accomplices, that Scotsman and the whole gang. Ah, if I had accomplices!"

Necessity is the mother of the arts; under a spur so immediate Morris surprised himself by the neatness and despatch of his new forgery; and within three-fourths of an hour had handed it to Mr. Moss.

"That is very satisfactory," observed that

gentleman, rising. "I was to tell you it will not be presented, but you had better take care."

The room swam round Morris. "What—what's that!" he cried, grasping the table; he was miserably conscious, the next moment, of his shrill tongue and ashen face. "What do you mean—it will not be presented? Why am I to take care? What is all this mummery?"

"I have no idea, Mr. Finsbury," replied the smiling Hebrew. "It was a message I was to deliver; the expressions were put into my mouth."

"What is your client's name?" asked Morris.

"That is a secret for the moment," answered Mr. Moss.

Morris bent toward him. "It's not the bank?" he asked, hoarsely.

"I have no authority to say more, Mr. Finsbury," returned Mr. Moss. "I will wish you a good-morning, if you please."

"Wish me a good-morning!" thought Morris; and the next moment, seizing his hat, he fled from his place of business like a madman. Three streets away he stopped and groaned. "Lord! I should have borrowed from the manager!" he cried. "But it's too late now; it would look dicky to go back; I'm penniless—simply penniless—like the unemployed."

He went home and sat in the dismantled dining-room with his head in his hands. Newton never thought harder than this victim of

circumstance, and yet no clearness came. "It may be a defect in my intelligence," he cried, rising to his feet, "but I cannot see that I am fairly used. The bad luck I've had is a thing to write to *The Times* about; it's enough to breed a revolution. And the plain English of the whole thing is that I must have money at once. I'm done with all morality now; I'm long past that stage; money I must have, and the only chance I see is Bent Pitman. Bent Pitman is a criminal, and therefore his position's weak. He must have some of that eight hundred left; if he has I'll force him to go shares; and even if he hasn't, I'll tell him the tontine affair, and with a desperate man like Pitman at my back, it'll be strange if I don't succeed."

Well and good. But how to lay hands upon Bent Pitman, except by advertisement, was not so clear. And even so, in what terms to ask a meeting? on what grounds? and where? Not at John Street, for it would never do to let a man like Bent Pitman know your real address; nor yet at Pitman's house, some dreadful place in Holloway, with a trap-door in the back kitchen; a house which you might enter in a light summer overcoat and varnished boots, to come forth again piecemeal in a market-basket. That was the drawback of a really efficient accomplice, Morris felt, not without a shudder. "I never dreamed I should come to actually covet such society," he thought. And then a brilliant idea struck

him. Waterloo Station, a public place, yet at certain hours of the day a solitary; a place, besides, the very name of which must knock upon the heart of Pitman, and at once suggest a knowledge of the latest of his guilty secrets. Morris took a piece of paper and sketched his advertisement.

"WILLIAM BENT PITMAN, if this should meet the eye of, he will hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at the far end of the main line departure platform, Waterloo Station, 2 to 4 P. M., Sunday next."

Morris reperused this literary trifle with approbation. "Terse," he reflected. "Something to his advantage is not strictly true; but it's taking and original, and a man is not on oath in an advertisement. All that I require now is the ready cash for my own meals and for the advertisement, and—no, I can't lavish money upon John, but I'll give him some more papers. How to raise the wind?"

He approached his cabinet of signets, and the collector suddenly revolted in his blood. "I will not!" he cried, "nothing shall induce me to massacre my collection—rather theft!" And dashing up-stairs to the drawing-room, he helped himself to a few of his uncle's curiosities: a pair of Turkish babooshes, a Smyrna fan, a water-cooler, a musket guaranteed to have been seized from an Ephesian bandit, and a pocketful of curious but incomplete sea-shells.

CHAPTER XIV

WILLIAM BENT PITMAN HEARS OF SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE

ON the morning of Sunday, William Dent Pitman rose at his usual hour, although with something more than the usual reluctance. The day before (it should be explained) an addition had been made to his family in the person of a lodger. Michael Finsbury had acted sponsor in the business, and guaranteed the weekly bill; on the other hand, no doubt with a spice of his prevailing jocularity, he had drawn a depressing portrait of the lodger's character. Mr. Pitman had been led to understand his guest was not good company; he had approached the gentleman with fear, and had rejoiced to find himself the entertainer of an angel. At tea he had been vastly pleased; till hard on one in the morning he had sat entranced by eloquence and progressively fortified with information in the studio; and now, as he reviewed over his toilet the harmless pleasures of the evening, the future smiled upon him with revived attractions. "Mr. Finsbury is, indeed, an acquisi-

tion," he remarked to himself; and as he entered the little parlour, where the table was already laid for breakfast, the cordiality of his greeting would have befitted an acquaintanceship already old.

"I am delighted to see you, sir"—these were his expressions—"and I trust you have slept well."

"Accustomed as I have been for so long to a life of almost perpetual change," replied the guest, "the disturbance so often complained of by the more sedentary, as attending their first night in (what is called) a new bed is a complaint from which I am entirely free."

"I am delighted to hear it," said the drawing-master warmly. "But I see I have interrupted you over the paper."

"The Sunday paper is one of the features of the age," said Mr. Finsbury. "In America, I am told, it supersedes all other literature, the bone and sinew of the nation finding their requirements catered for; hundreds of columns will be occupied with interesting details of the world's doings, such as water-spouts, elopements, conflagrations, and public entertainments; there is a corner for politics, ladies' work, chess, religion, and even literature; and a few spicy editorials serve to direct the course of public thought. It is difficult to estimate the part played by such enormous and miscellaneous repositories in the education of the people. But this (though in-

teresting in itself) partakes of the nature of a digression; and what I was about to ask you was this: Are you yourself a student of the daily press?"

"There is not much in the papers to interest an artist," returned Pitman.

"In that case," resumed Joseph, "an advertisement which has appeared the last two days in various journals, and reappears this morning, may possibly have failed to catch your eye. The name, with a trifling variation, bears a strong resemblance to your own. Ah, here it is. If you please, I will read it to you.

"'WILLIAM BENT PITMAN, if this should meet the eye of, he will hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at the far end of the main line departure platform, Waterloo Station, 2 to 4 P. M. to-day.'"

"Is that in print?" cried Pitman. "Let me see it! Bent? It must be Dent! *Something to my advantage?* Mr. Finsbury, excuse me offering a word of caution; I am aware how strangely this must sound in your ears, but there are domestic reasons why this little circumstance might perhaps be better kept between ourselves. Mrs. Pitman—my dear sir, I assure you there is nothing dishonourable in my secrecy; the reasons are domestic, merely domestic; and I may set your conscience at rest when I assure you all the circumstances are known to

our common friend, your excellent nephew, Mr. Michael, who has not withdrawn from me his esteem."

"A word is enough, Mr. Pitman," said Joseph, with one of his Oriental reverences.

Half an hour later, the drawing-master found Michael in bed and reading a book, the picture of good-humour and repose.

"Hillo, Pitman," he said, laying down his book, "what brings you here at this inclement hour? Ought to be in church, my boy!"

"I have little thought of church to-day, Mr. Finsbury," said the drawing-master. "I am on the brink of something new, sir." And he presented the advertisement.

"Why, what is this?" cried Michael, sitting suddenly up. He studied it for half a minute with a frown. "Pitman, I don't care about this document a particle," said he.

"It will have to be attended to, however," said Pitman.

"I thought you'd had enough of Waterloo," returned the lawyer. "Have you started a morbid craving? You've never been yourself anyway since you lost that beard. I believe now it was where you kept your senses."

"Mr. Finsbury," said the drawing-master, "I have tried to reason this matter out, and with your permission, I should like to lay before you the results."

"Fire away," said Michael; "but please, Pit-

man, remember it's Sunday, and let's have no bad language."

"There are three views open to us," began Pitman. "First, this may be connected with the barrel; second it may be connected with Mr. Semitopolis's statue; and third, it may be from my wife's brother, who went to Australia. In the first case, which is of course possible, I confess the matter would be best allowed to drop."

"The court is with you there, Brother Pitman," said Michael.

"In the second," continued the other, "it is plainly my duty to leave no stone unturned for the recovery of the lost antique."

"My dear fellow, Semitopolis has come down like a trump; he has pocketed the loss and left you the profit. What more would you have?" inquired the lawyer.

"I conceive, sir, under correction, that Mr. Semitopolis's generosity binds me to even greater exertion," said the drawing-master. "The whole business was unfortunate; it was—I need not disguise it from you—it was illegal from the first: the more reason that I should try to behave like a gentleman," concluded Pitman, flushing.

"I have nothing to say to that," returned the lawyer. "I have sometimes thought I would like to try to behave like a gentleman myself; only it's such a one-sided business, with the world and the legal profession as they are."

"Then, in the third," resumed the drawing-

master, "if it's Uncle Tim, of course, our fortune's made."

"It's not Uncle Tim, though," said the lawyer.

"Have you observed that very remarkable expression: *Something to his advantage?*" inquired Pitman, shrewdly.

"You innocent mutton," said Michael, "it's the seediest commonplace in the English language, and only proves the advertiser is an ass. Let me demolish your house of cards for you at once. Would Uncle Tim make that blunder in your name?—in itself, the blunder is delicious, a huge improvement on the gross reality, and I mean to adopt it in the future; but is it like Uncle Tim?"

"No, it's not like him," Pitman admitted. "But his mind may have become unhinged at Ballarat."

"If you come to that, Pitman," said Michael, "the advertiser *may* be Queen Victoria, fired with the desire to make a duke of you. I put it to yourself if that's probable; and yet it's not against the laws of nature. But we sit here to consider probabilities; and with your genteel permission, I eliminate Her Majesty and Uncle Tim on the threshold. To proceed, we have your second idea, that this has some connection with the statue. Possible; but in that case who is the advertiser? Not Ricardi, for he knows your address; not the person who got the box, for he doesn't know your name. The van-man,

I hear you suggest, in a lucid interval. He might have got your name, and got it incorrectly, at the station; and he might have failed to get your address. I grant the van-man. But a question: Do you really wish to meet the van-man?"

"Why should I not?" asked Pitman.

"If he wants to meet you," replied Michael, "observe this: it is because he has found his address-book, has been to the house that got the statue, and—mark my words!—is moving at the instigation of the murderer."

"I should be very sorry to think so," said Pitman; "but I still consider it my duty to Mr. Semitopolis . . ."

"Pitman," interrupted Michael, "this will not do. Don't seek to impose on your legal adviser; don't try to pass yourself off for the Duke of Wellington, for that is not your line. Come, I wager a dinner I can read your thoughts. You still believe it's Uncle Tim."

"Mr. Finsbury," said the drawing-master, colouring, "you are not a man in narrow circumstances, and you have no family. Guendolen is growing up, a very promising girl—she was confirmed this year; and I think you will be able to enter into my feelings as a parent, when I tell you she is quite ignorant of dancing. The boys are at the board-school, which is all very well in its way; at least, I am the last man in the world to criticise the institutions of my native land. But I had fondly hoped that

Harold might become a professional musician; and little Otho shows a quite remarkable vocation for the Church. I am not exactly an ambitious man . . ."

"Well, well," interrupted Michael. "Be explicit, you think it's Uncle Tim."

"It might be Uncle Tim," insisted Pitman, "and if it were, and I neglected the occasion, how could I ever look my children in the face? I do not refer to Mrs. Pitman . . ."

"No, you never do," said Michael.

". . . but in the case of her own brother returning from Ballarat . . ." continued Pitman.

". . . with his mind unhinged," put in the lawyer.

". . . returning from Ballarat with a large fortune, her impatience may be more easily imagined than described," concluded Pitman.

"All right," said Michael, "be it so. And what do you propose to do?"

"I am going to Waterloo," said Pitman, "in disguise."

"All by your little self?" inquired the lawyer. "Well, I hope you think it safe. Mind and send me word from the police cells."

"Oh, Mr. Finsbury, I had ventured to hope —perhaps you might be induced to—to make one of us," faltered Pitman.

"Disguise myself on Sunday?" cried Michael. "How little you understand my principles!"

"Mr. Finsbury, I have no means of showing you my gratitude; but let me ask you one question," said Pitman. "If I were a very rich client, would you not take the risk?"

"Diamond, Diamond, you know not what you do!" cried Michael. "Why, man, do you suppose I make a practice of cutting about London with my clients in disguise? Do you suppose money would induce me to touch this business with a stick? I give you my word of honour, it would not. But I own I have a real curiosity to see how you conduct this interview—that tempts me; it tempts me, Pitman, more than gold—it should be exquisitely rich." And suddenly Michael laughed. "Well, Pitman," said he, "have all the truck ready in the studio. I'll go."

About twenty minutes after two, on this eventful day, the vast and gloomy shed of Waterloo lay, like the temple of a dead religion, silent and deserted. Here and there, at one of the platforms, a train lay becalmed; here and there a wandering footfall echoed; the cab-horses outside stamped with startling reverberations on the stones: or from the neighbouring wilderness of railway an engine snorted forth a whistle. The main line departure platform slumbered like the rest; the booking-hutches closed; the backs of Mr. Haggard's novels, with which upon a week-day the book-stall shines emblazoned, discreetly hidden behind dingy shutters; the rare officials,

undisguisedly somnambulant; and the customary loiterers, even to the middle-aged woman with the ulster and the handbag, fled to more congenial scenes. As in the inmost dells of some small tropic island the throbbing of the ocean lingers, so here a faint pervading hum and trepidation told in every corner of surrounding London.

At the hour already named, persons acquainted with John Dickson, of Ballarat, and Ezra Thomas, of the United States of America, would have been cheered to behold them enter through the booking-office.

"What names are we to take?" inquired the latter, anxiously adjusting the window-glass spectacles which he had been suffered on this occasion to assume.

"There's no choice for you, my boy," returned Michael. "Bent Pitman or nothing. As for me, I think I look as if I might be called Appleby; something agreeably old-world about Appleby—breathes of Devonshire cider. Talking of which, suppose you wet your whistle? the interview is likely to be trying."

"I think I'll wait till afterwards," returned Pitman, "on the whole, I think I'll wait till the thing's over. I don't know if it strikes you as it does me; but the place seems deserted and silent, Mr. Finsbury, and filled with very singular echoes."

"Kind of Jack-in-the-box feeling?" inquired

Michael, "as if all these empty trains might be filled with policemen waiting for a signal? and Sir Charles Warren perched among the girders with a silver whistle to his lips? It's guilt, Pitman."

In this uneasy frame of mind they walked nearly the whole length of the departure platform, and at the western extremity became aware of a slender figure standing back against a pillar. The figure was plainly sunk into a deep abstraction; he was not aware of their approach, but gazed far abroad over the sunlit station. Michael stopped.

"Holloa!" said he, "can that be your advertiser? If so, I'm done with it." And then, on second thoughts: "Not so, either," he resumed, more cheerfully. "Here, turn your back a moment. So. Give me the specs."

"But you agreed I was to have them," protested Pitman.

"Ah, but that man knows me," said Michael.

"Does he? what's his name?" cried Pitman.

"Oh, he took me into his confidence," returned the lawyer. "But I may say one thing: If he's your advertiser (and he may be, for he seems to have been seized with criminal lunacy) you can go ahead with a clear conscience, for I hold him in the hollow of my hand."

The change effected, and Pitman comforted with this good news, the pair drew near to Morris.

"Are you looking for Mr. William Bent Pitman?" inquired the drawing-master. "I am he."

Morris raised his head. He saw before him, in the speaker, a person of almost indescribable insignificance, in white spats and a shirt cut indecently low. A little behind a second and more burly figure offered little to criticism, except ulster, whiskers, spectacles, and deer-stalker hat. Since he had decided to call up devils from the underworld of London, Morris had pondered deeply on the probabilities of their appearance. His first emotion, like that of Charoba when she beheld the sea, was one of disappointment; his second did more justice to the case. Never before had he seen a couple dressed like these; he had struck a new stratum.

"I must speak with you alone," said he.

"You need not mind Mr. Appleby," returned Pitman. "He knows all."

"All? Do you know what I am here to speak of?" inquired Morris. "The barrel."

Pitman turned pale, but it was with manly indignation. "You are the man!" he cried. "You very wicked person!"

"Am I to speak before him?" asked Morris, disregarding these severe expressions.

"He has been present throughout," said Pitman. "He opened the barrel; your guilty secret is already known to him, as well as to your Maker and myself."

"Well, then," said Morris, "what have you done with the money?"

"I know nothing about any money," said Pitman.

"You needn't try that on," said Morris. "I have tracked you down: you came to the station sacrilegiously disguised as a clergyman, procured my barrel, opened it, rifled the body, and cashed the bill. I have been to the bank, I tell you! I have followed you step by step, and your denials are childish and absurd."

"Come, come, Morris, keep your temper," said Mr. Appleby.

"Michael!" cried Morris, "Michael here too!"

"Here too," echoed the lawyer, "here and everywhere, my good fellow; every step you take is counted; trained detectives follow you like your shadow; they report to me every three-quarters of an hour; no expense is spared."

Morris's face took on a hue of dirty gray. "Well, I don't care; I have the less reserve to keep," he cried. "That man cashed my bill; it's a theft, and I want the money back."

"Do you think I would lie to you, Morris?" asked Michael.

"I don't know," said his cousin. "I want my money."

"It was I alone who touched the body," began Michael.

"You? Michael!" cried Morris, starting back. "Then why haven't you declared the death?"

"What the devil do you mean?" asked Michael.

"Am I mad? or are you?" cried Morris.

"I think it must be Pitman," said Michael.

The three men stared at each other, wild-eyed.

"This is dreadful," said Morris, "dreadful. I do not understand one word that is addressed to me."

"I give you my word of honour, no more do I," said Michael.

"And in God's name, why whiskers?" cried Morris, pointing in a ghastly manner at his cousin. "Does my brain reel? How whiskers?"

"Oh, that's a matter of detail," said Michael.

There was another silence, during which Morris appeared to himself to be shot in a trapeze as high as St. Paul's, and as low as Baker Street Station.

"Let us recapitulate," said Michael, "unless it's really a dream, in which case I wish Teena would call me for breakfast. My friend Pitman, here, received a barrel which, it now appears, was meant for you. The barrel contained the body of a man. How or why you killed him . . ."

"I never laid a hand on him," protested Morris. "This is what I have dreaded all along. But think, Michael! I'm not that kind of man; with all my faults, I wouldn't touch a hair of anybody's head, and it was all dead loss to me. He got killed in that vile accident."

Suddenly Michael was seized by mirth so pro-

longed and excessive that his companions supposed beyond a doubt his reason had deserted him. Again and again he struggled to compose himself, and again and again laughter overwhelmed him like a tide. In all this maddening interview there had been no more spectral feature than this of Michael's merriment; and Pitman and Morris, drawn together by the common fear, exchanged glances of anxiety.

"Morris," gasped the lawyer, when he was at last able to articulate, "hold on, I see it all now. I can make it all clear in one word. Here's the key: *I never guessed it was Uncle Joseph till this moment.*"

This remark produced an instant lightening of the tension for Morris; for Pitman, it quenched the last ray of hope and daylight. Uncle Joseph, whom he had left an hour ago in Norfolk Street, pasting newspaper cuttings?—it?—the dead body?—then who was he, Pitman? and was this Waterloo Station or Colney Hatch?

"To be sure!" cried Morris; "it was badly smashed, I know. How stupid not to think of that. Why, then, all's clear; and, my dear Michael, I'll tell you what—we're saved, both saved. You get the tontine—I don't grudge it you the least—and I get the leather business, which is really beginning to look up. Declare the death at once, don't mind me in the smallest, don't consider me; declare the death, and we're all right."

"Ah, but I can't declare it," said Michael.

"Why not?" cried Morris.

"I can't produce the corpus, Morris. I've lost it," said the lawyer.

"Stop a bit," ejaculated the leather merchant. "How is this? It's not possible. I lost it."

"Well, I've lost it too, my son," said Michael, with extreme serenity. "Not recognising it, you see, and suspecting something irregular in its origin, I got rid of—what shall we say?—got rid of the proceeds at once."

"You got rid of the body? What made you do that?" wailed Morris. "But you can get it again? You know where it is?"

"I wish I did, Morris, and you may believe me there, for it would be a small sum in my pocket; but the fact is, I don't," said Michael.

"Good Lord," said Morris, addressing heaven and earth, "good Lord, I've lost the leather business."

Michael was once more shaken with laughter.

"Why do you laugh, you fool?" cried his cousin. "you lose more than I. You've bungled it worse than even I did. If you had a spark of feeling, you would be shaking in your boots with vexation. But I'll tell you one thing—I'll have that eight hundred pound—I'll have that and go to Swan River—that's mine, anyway, and your friend must have forged to cash it. Give me the eight hundred, here, upon this platform, or I go straight to Scotland Yard and turn the whole disreputable story inside out."

"Morris," said Michael, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "hear reason. It wasn't us, it was the other man. We never even searched the body."

"The other man?" repeated Morris.

"Yes, the other man. We palmed Uncle Joseph off upon another man," said Michael.

"You what? You palmed him off? That's surely a singular expression," said Morris.

"Yes, palmed him off for a piano," said Michael, with perfect simplicity. "Remarkably full, rich tone," he added.

Morris carried his hand to his brow and looked at it; it was wet with sweat. "Fever," said he.

"No, it was a Broadwood grand," said Michael. "Pitman here will tell you if it was genuine or not."

"Eh? Oh! Oh, yes, I believe it was a genuine Broadwood; I have played upon it several times myself," said Pitman. "The three-letter E was broken."

"Don't say anything more about pianos," said Morris, with a strong shudder; "I'm not the man I used to be! This—this other man—let's come to him, if I can only manage to follow. Who is he? Where can I get hold of him?"

"Ah, that's the rub," said Michael. "He's been in possession of the desired article, let me see—since Wednesday, about four o'clock, and is now, I should imagine, on his way to the isles of Javan and Godire."

"Michael," said Morris, pleadingly, "I am in a very weak state, and I beg your consideration for a kinsman. Say it slowly again, and be sure you are correct. When did he get it?"

Michael repeated his statement.

"Yes, that's the worst thing yet," said Morris, drawing in his breath.

"What is?" asked the lawyer.

"Even the dates are sheer nonsense," said the leather merchant. "The bill was cashed on Tuesday. There's not a gleam of reason in the whole transaction."

A young gentleman, who had passed the trio and suddenly started and turned back, at this moment laid a heavy hand on Michael's shoulder.

"Aha, so this is Mr. Dickson?" said he.

The trump of judgment could scarce have rung with a more dreadful note in the ears of Pitman and the lawyer. To Morris this erroneous name seemed a legitimate enough continuation of the nightmare in which he had so long been wandering. And when Michael, with his brand-new bushy whiskers, broke from the grasp of the stranger and turned to run, and the weird little shaven creature in the low-necked shirt followed his example with a bird-like screech, and the stranger (finding the rest of his prey escape him) pounced with a rude grasp on Morris himself, that gentleman's frame of mind might be very nearly expressed in the colloquial phrase: "I told you so!"

"I have one of the gang," said Gideon Forsyth.

"I do not understand," said Morris dully.

"Oh, I will make you understand," returned Gideon, grimly.

"You will be a good friend to me if you can make me understand anything," cried Morris, with a sudden energy of conviction.

"I don't know you personally, do I?" continued Gideon, examining his unresisting prisoner. "Never mind, I know your friends. They are your friends, are they not?"

"I do not understand you," said Morris.

"You had possibly something to do with a piano?" suggested Gideon.

"A piano!" cried Morris, convulsively clasping Gideon by the arm. "Then you're the other man! Where is it? Where is the body? And did you cash the draft?"

"Where is the body? This is very strange," mused Gideon. "Do you want the body?"

"Want it?" cried Morris. "My whole fortune depends upon it! I lost it. Where is it? Take me to it!"

"Oh, you want it, do you? And the other man, Dickson—does he want it?" inquired Gideon.

"Who do you mean by Dickson? Oh, Michael Finsbury! Why, of course he does! He lost it too. If he had it he'd have won the tontine to-morrow."

"Michael Finsbury! Not the solicitor?" cried Gideon.

"Yes, the solicitor," said Morris. "But where is the body?"

"Then that is why he sent the brief! What is Mr. Finsbury's private address?" asked Gideon.

"233 King's Road. What brief? Where are you going? Where is the body?" cried Morris, clinging to Gideon's arm.

"I have lost it myself," returned Gideon, and ran out of the station.

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURN OF THE GREAT VANCE

MORRIS returned from Waterloo in a frame of mind that baffles description. He was a modest man; he had never conceived an overweening notion of his own powers; he knew himself unfit to write a book, turn a table napkin-ring, entertain a Christmas party with legerdemain—grapple (in short) any of those conspicuous accomplishments that are usually classed under the head of genius. He knew—he admitted—his parts to be pedestrian, but he had considered them (until quite lately) fully equal to the demands of life. And to-day he owned himself defeated: life had the upper hand; if there had been any means of flight or place to flee to, if the world had been so ordered that a man could leave it like a place of entertainment, Morris would have instantly resigned all further claim on its rewards and pleasures, and, with inexpressible contentment, ceased to be. As it was, one aim shone before him: he could get home. Even as the sick dog crawls under the sofa, Morris could shut the door of John Street and be alone.

The dusk was falling when he drew near this place of refuge; and the first thing that met his eyes was the figure of a man upon the step, alternately plucking at the bell-handle and pounding on the panels. The man had no hat, his clothes were hideous with filth, he had the air of a hop-picker. Yet Morris knew him; it was John.

The first impulse of flight was succeeded, in the elder brother's bosom, by the empty quiescence of despair. "What does it matter now?" he thought, and drawing forth his latch-key ascended the steps.

John turned about; his face was ghastly with weariness and dirt and fury; and as he recognised the head of his family, he drew in a long rasping breath, and his eyes glittered.

"Open that door," he said, standing back.

"I am going to," said Morris, and added, mentally, "he looks like murder!"

The brothers passed into the hall, the door closed behind them; and suddenly John seized Morris by the shoulders and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat. "You mangy little cad," he said, "I'd serve you right to smash your skull!" And shook him again, so that his teeth rattled and his head smote upon the wall.

"Don't be violent, Johnny," said Morris. "It can't do any good now."

"Shut your mouth," said John, "your time's come to listen."

He strode into the dining-room, fell into the easy-chair, and taking off one of his burst walking-shoes, nursed for a while his foot like one in agony. "I'm lame for life," he said. "What is there for dinner?"

"Nothing, Johnny," said Morris.

"Nothing? What do you mean by that?" inquired the Great Vance. "Don't set up your chat to me!"

"I mean simply nothing," said his brother. "I have nothing to eat, and nothing to buy it with. I've only had a cup of tea and a sandwich all this day myself."

"Only a sandwich?" sneered Vance. "I suppose *you*'re going to complain next. But you had better take care: I've had all I mean to take; and I can tell you what it is, I mean to dine and to dine well. Take your signets and sell them."

"I can't to-day," objected Morris, "it's Sunday."

"I tell you I'm going to dine!" cried the younger brother.

"But if it's not possible, Johnny?" pleaded the other.

"You nincompoop!" cried Vance. "Ain't we householders? Don't they know us at that hotel where Uncle Parker used to come? Be off with you; and if you ain't back in half an hour, and if the dinner ain't good, first I'll lick you till you don't want to breathe, and then I'll go straight to the police and blow the gaff. Do

you understand that, Morris Finsbury? Because if you do, you had better jump."

The idea smiled even upon the wretched Morris, who was sick with famine. He sped upon his errand, and returned to find John still nursing his foot in the arm-chair.

"What would you like to drink, Johnny?" he inquired, soothingly.

"Fizz," said John. "Some of the poppy stuff from the end bin; a bottle of the old port that Michael liked, to follow; and see and don't shake the port. And look here, light the fire—and the gas, and draw down the blinds; it's cold and it's getting dark. And then you can lay the cloth. And, I say—here, you! bring me down some clothes."

The room looked comparatively habitable by the time the dinner came; and the dinner itself was good: strong gravy soup, fillets of sole, mutton chops and tomato sauce, roast beef done rare with roast potatoes, cabinet pudding, a piece of Chester cheese, and some early celery: a meal uncompromisingly British, but supporting.

"Thank God!" said John, his nostrils sniffing wide, surprised by joy into the unwonted formality of grace. "Now I'm going to take this chair with my back to the fire—there's been a strong frost these two last nights, and I can't get it out of my bones; the celery will be just the ticket—I'm going to sit here, and you are going

to stand there, Morris Finsbury, and play butler."

"But, Johnny, I'm so hungry myself," pleaded Morris.

"You can have what I leave," said Vance. "You're just beginning to pay your score, my daisy; I owe you one pound ten; don't you rouse the British lion!" There was something indescribably menacing in the face and voice of the Great Vance as he uttered these words, at which the soul of Morris withered. "There!" resumed the feaster, "give us a glass of the fizz to start with. Gravy soup! And I thought I didn't like gravy soup! Do you know how I got here?" he asked, with another explosion of wrath.

"No, Johnny, how could I?" said the obsequious Morris.

"I walked on my ten toes!" cried John; "tramped the whole way from Browndean; and begged! I would like to see you beg. It's not so easy as you might suppose. I played it on being a shipwrecked mariner from Blyth; I don't know where Blyth is, do you? but I thought it sounded natural. I begged from a little beast of a school-boy, and he forked out a bit of twine, and asked me to make a clove-hitch; I did, too, I know I did, but he said it wasn't, he said it was a granny's knot, and I was a what-d'ye call-'em, and he would give me in charge. Then I begged from a naval officer—he never bothered me with

knots, but he only gave me a tract; there's a nice account of the British navy!—and then from a widow woman that sold lollipops, and I got a hunch of bread from her. Another party I fell in with said you could generally always get bread; and the thing to do was to break a plate-glass window and get into gaol; seemed rather a brilliant scheme. Pass the beef."

"Why didn't you stay at Browndean?" Morris ventured to inquire.

"Skittles!" said John. "On what? The *Pink Un* and a measly religious paper? I had to leave Browndean; I had to, I tell you. I got tick at a public, and set up to be the Great Vance; so would you, if you were leading such a beastly existence! And a card stood me a lot of ale and stuff, and we got swipey, talking about music-halls and the piles of tin I got for singing; and then they got me on to sing 'Around her splendid form I weaved the magic circle,' and then he said I couldn't be Vance, and I stuck to it like grim death I was. It was rot of me to sing, of course, but I thought I could brazen it out with a set of yokels. It settled my hash at the public," said John, with a sigh. "And then the last thing was the carpenter——"

"Our landlord?" inquired Morris.

"That's the party," said John. "He came nosing about the place, and then wanted to know where the water-butt was, and the bed-clothes. I told him to go to the devil; so would you too,

when there was no possible thing to say! And then he said I had pawned them, and did I know it was felony? Then I made a pretty neat stroke. I remembered he was deaf, and talked a whole lot of rot, very politely, just so low he couldn't hear a word. 'I don't hear you,' says he. 'I know you don't, my buck, and I don't mean you to,' says I, smiling away like a haberdasher. 'I'm hard of hearing,' he roars. 'I'd be in a pretty hot corner if you weren't,' says I, making signs as if I was explaining everything. It was tip-top as long as it lasted. 'Well,' he said, 'I'm deaf, worse luck, but I bet the constable can hear you.' And off he started one way, and I the other. They got a spirit-lamp, and the *Pink Un*, and that old religious paper, and another periodical you sent me. I think you must have been drunk—it had a name like one of those spots that Uncle Joseph used to hold forth at, and it was all full of the most awful swipes about poetry and the use of the globes. It was the kind of thing that nobody could read out of a lunatic asylum. The *Athæneum*, that was the name! Golly, what a paper!"

"*Athenæum*, you mean," said Morris.

"I don't care what you call it," said John, "so as I don't require to take it in! There, I feel better. Now I'm going to sit by the fire in the easy chair; pass me the cheese, and the celery, and the bottle of port—no, a champagne

glass, it holds more. And now you can pitch in, there's some of the fish left, and a chop, and some fizz. Ah," sighed the refreshed pedestrian, "Michael was right about that port; there's old and vatted for you! Michael's a man I like; he's clever and reads books, and the *Athæneum*, and all that; but he's not dreary to meet, he don't talk *Athæneum* like the other parties; why, the most of them would throw a blight over a skittle alley! Talking of Michael, I ain't bored myself to put the question, because of course I knew it from the first. You've made a hash of it, eh?"

"Michael made a hash of it," said Morris, flushing dark.

"What have we got to do with that?" inquired John.

"He has lost the body, that's what we have to do with it," cried Morris. "He has lost the body, and the death can't be established."

"Hold on," said John. "I thought you didn't want to."

"Oh, we're far past that," said his brother. "It's not the tontine now, it's the leather business, Johnny; it's the clothes upon our back."

"Stow the slow music," said John, "and tell your story from beginning to end."

Morris did as he was bid.

"Well, now, what did I tell you?" cried the Great Vance, when the other had done. "But

I know one thing; I'm not going to be humbugged out of my property."

"I should like to know what you mean to do," said Morris.

"I'll tell you that," responded John, with extreme decision. "I'm going to put my interests in the hands of the smartest lawyer in London; and whether you go to quod or not is a matter of indifference to me."

"Why, Johnny, we're in the same boat!" expostulated Morris.

"Are we?" cried his brother. "I bet we're not! Have I committed forgery? have I lied about Uncle Joseph? have I put idiotic advertisements in the comic papers? have I smashed other people's statues? I like your cheek, Morris Finsbury. No, I've let you run my affairs too long; now they shall go to Michael. I like Michael, any way; and it's time I understood my situation."

At this moment the brethren were interrupted by a ring at the bell, and Morris going timorously to the door, received from the hands of a commissionnaire a letter addressed in the hand of Michael. Its contents ran as follows:

"Morris Finsbury, if this should meet the eye of, he will hear of SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE at my office, in Chancery Lane, at 10 A. M. to-morrow.

"MICHAEL FINSBURY."

So utter was Morris's subjection that he did not wait to be asked, but handed the note to John as soon as he had glanced at it himself.

"That's the way to write a letter," cried John. "Nobody but Michael could have written that."

And Morris did not even claim the credit of priority.

CHAPTER XVI

FINAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE LEATHER BUSINESS

FINSBURY brothers were ushered, at ten the next morning, into a large apartment in Michael's office; the Great Vance, somewhat restored from yesterday's exhaustion, but with one foot in a slipper; Morris, not positively damaged, but a man ten years older than he who had left Bournemouth eight days before, his face ploughed full of anxious wrinkles, his dark hair liberally grizzled at the temples.

Three persons were seated at a table to receive them: Michael in the midst, Gideon Forsyth at his right hand, on his left an ancient gentleman with spectacles and silver hair.

"By Jings, it's Uncle Joe!" cried John.

But Morris approached his uncle with a pale countenance and glittering eyes.

"I'll tell you what you did!" he cried. "You absconded!"

"Good-morning, Morris Finsbury," returned Joseph, with no less asperity; "you are looking seriously ill."

"No use making trouble now," remarked Michael. "Look the facts in the face. Your uncle, as you see, was not so much as shaken in the accident; a man of your humane disposition ought to be delighted."

"Then, if that's so," Morris broke forth, "how about the body? You don't mean to insinuate that thing I schemed and sweated for, and colported with my own hands, was the body of a total stranger?"

"Oh, no, we can't go as far as that," said Michael, soothingly; "you may have met him at the club."

Morris fell into a chair. "I would have found it out if it had come to the house," he complained. "And why didn't it? why did it go to Pitman? what right had Pitman to open it?"

"If you come to that, Morris, what have you done with the colossal Hercules?" asked Michael.

"He went through it with the meat-axe," said John. "It's all in spillikins in the back garden."

"Well, there's one thing," snapped Morris; "there's my uncle again, my fraudulent trustee. He's mine, any way. And the tontine, too. I claim the tontine; I claim it now. I believe Uncle Masterman's dead."

"I must put a stop to this nonsense," said Michael, "and that for ever. You say too near the truth. In one sense your uncle is dead, and has been so long; but not in the sense of the ton-

tine, which it is even on the cards he may yet live to win. Uncle Joseph saw him this morning; he will tell you he still lives, but his mind is in abeyance."

"He did not know me," said Joseph; to do him justice, not without emotion.

"So you're out again there, Morris," said John. "My eye, what a fool you've made of yourself!"

"And that was why you wouldn't compromise," said Morris.

"As for the absurd position in which you and Uncle Joseph have been making yourselves an exhibition," resumed Michael, "it is more than time it came to an end. I have prepared a proper discharge in full, which you shall sign as a preliminary."

"What!" cried Morris, "and lose my seven thousand eight hundred pounds, and the leather business, and the contingent interest, and get nothing? Thank you!"

"It's like you to feel gratitude, Morris," began Michael.

"Oh, I know it's no good appealing to you, you sneering devil!" cried Morris. "But there's a stranger present, I can't think why, and I appeal to him. I was robbed of this money when I was an orphan, a mere child, at a commercial academy. Since then I've never had a wish but to get back my own. You may hear a lot of stuff about me; and there's no doubt at times I

have been ill-advised. But it's the pathos of my situation; that's what I want to show you."

"Morris," interrupted Michael, "I do wish you would let me add one point, for I think it will affect your judgment. It's pathetic too—since that's your taste in literature."

"Well, what is it?" said Morris.

"It's only the name of one of the persons who's to witness your signature, Morris," replied Michael. "His name's Moss, my dear."

There was a long silence. "I might have been sure it was you!" cried Morris.

"You'll sign, won't you?" said Michael.

"Do you know what you're doing?" cried Morris. "You're compounding a felony."

"Very well, then, we won't compound it, Morris," returned Michael. "See how little I understood the sterling integrity of your character! I thought you would prefer it so."

"Look here, Michael," said John, "this is all very fine and large; but how about me? Morris is gone up, I see that; but I'm not. And I was robbed too, mind you; and just as much an orphan, and at the blessed same academy as himself."

"Johnny," said Michael, "don't you think you'd better leave it to me?"

"I'm your man," said John. "You wouldn't deceive a poor orphan, I'll take my oath. Morris, you sign that document, or I'll start in and astonish your weak mind."

With a sudden alacrity, Morris proffered his willingness; clerks were brought in; the discharge was executed; and there was Joseph a free man once more.

"And now," said Michael, "hear what I propose to do. Here, John and Morris, is the leather business made over to the pair of you in partnership; I have valued it at the lowest possible figure, Pogram and Jarris's. And here is a cheque for the balance of your fortune. Now you see, Morris, you start fresh from the Commercial Academy; and as you said yourself the leather business was looking up, I suppose you'll probably marry before long. Here's your marriage present; from a Mr. Moss."

Morris bounded on his cheque with a crimsoned countenance.

"I don't understand the performance," remarked John. "It seems too good to be true."

"It's simply a re-adjustment," Michael explained. "I take up Uncle Joseph's liabilities; and if he gets the tontine, it's to be mine. If my father gets it, it's mine any way, you see. So that I'm rather advantageously placed."

"Morris, my unconverted friend, you've got left," was John's comment.

"And now, Mr. Forsyth," resumed Michael, turning to his silent guest, "here are all the criminals before you, except Pitman. I really didn't like to interrupt his scholastic career; but you can have him arrested at the Seminary: I

know his hours. Here we are, then; we're not pretty to look at; what do you propose to do with us?"

"Nothing in the world, Mr. Finsbury," returned Gideon. "I seem to understand that this gentleman"—indicating Morris—"is the *fons et origo* of the trouble; and from what I gather, he has already paid through the nose. And really, to be quite frank, I do not see who is to gain by any scandal; not me, at least. And besides, I have to thank you for that brief."

Michael blushed. "It was the least I could do to let you have some business," he said. "But there's one thing more. I don't want you to misjudge poor Pitman, who is the most harmless being upon earth; I wish you would dine with me to-night, and see the creature on his native heath—say, at Verrey's."

"I have no engagement, Mr. Finsbury," replied Gideon. "I shall be delighted. But—subject to your judgment—can we do nothing for the man in the cart? I have qualms of conscience."

"Nothing but sympathise," said Michael.

ISLAND NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS

PREFATORY NOTE

AMONG our English friends whom we first met in Bournemouth were Sir Percy Shelley, the son of the poet, and his charming wife. They lived at Boscombe Manor, in a rambling, comfortable house set in the midst of trees and lawn and shrubbery, where Sir Percy was always seriously busied in play of a more or less practical nature. He even worked with carpenter's tools—much to the disgust of his butler, who once gave warning for that reason, his dignity being unable to stand the strain of his master's low occupation. Sir Percy also took photographs in a studio he helped to build with his own hands. For backgrounds for his pictures he painted out-of-door scenes in the most realistic manner, his sitters being posed on a piece of canvas made to represent a greensward.

One wing of the house had been turned into a private theatre holding about three hundred guests. All the stage accessories were planned and many of them made by Sir Percy. Both he and Lady Shelley took part in the plays—usually old-fashioned melodramas—that they produced for the pleasure and

amusement of their friends. Of these melodramas Sir Percy had a large assortment, principally by an author, even then almost forgotten, named Fitzball. After Sir Percy's death (my husband's dedication to *The Master of Ballantrae* reached him just before the end) the little theatre being closed for ever, Lady Shelley gave the stock of Fitzball melodramas to my husband.

Fitzball, following the example of greater dramatists, took ideas for his plays where he could find them, and after changing or elaborating them as the occasion required, reproduced them as melodramas. One of these, adapted from an old German legend, caught my husband's fancy; he spoke of it several times when we were living in Honolulu, as being, in its ingenuity and imaginative qualities, singularly like the Hawaiian tales. No doubt Fitzball's melodrama differed widely from the original *German Bottle Imp;* certainly there was very little resemblance between his version and my husband's story that was meant to appeal more particularly to the native mind. The tale was first published in England in *Black and White*, and then translated by one of the missionaries into the Samoan tongue for the Sulu (the torch of Samoa) under the title of *O Le Fangu Aitu*, running in weekly numbers as a serial.

The Bottle Imp was the first piece of fiction ever offered to the Samoan people, its publication raising the circulation of the paper to an unprecedented ex-

tent. Samoans are in the habit of speaking in parables; they found many different morals in *The Bottle Imp*, some very ingeniously extracted. Yet the story was so circumstantial in its details, and its incidents seemed so like reality, that doubts would occasionally assail some inquiring mind; perhaps, after all, it might be true, and the magic bottle still be in existence. We wondered why so many of our native visitors demanded a view of the large safe in Vailima, and were puzzled by the expression of disappointment that crossed their faces when they were shown its interior and saw that it contained nothing more than papers and a little money. We afterwards discovered there was a popular belief that Tusitala still possessed the magic bottle, and the great iron safe had been placed in Vailima solely for its protection.

The magic bottle was the natural explanation of the source of Tusitala's immense wealth, which enabled him not only to purchase many tins of ship's biscuit and barrels of salt beef, but to regale his Samoan friends in the most princely fashion on cans of salmon and other expensive foreign luxuries. I do not understand what civilising effect the story of *The Bottle Imp* was supposed to have on the natives, but I cannot think it quite fulfilled the expectations of the missionary who translated it. At all events, *The Isle of Voices* was allowed to remain in the obscurity of the '*Palangi* (English) language, and was

not translated, as had been intended, into Samoan.

On our first South Sea cruise we stopped, among other places, at Fakarava, in the Dangerous Archipelago. Leaving the yacht *Casco* in the lagoon, my husband hired a little cottage on the beach, where we lived for several weeks. Fakarava is an atoll of the usual horseshoe shape, so narrow that one can walk across it in ten minutes, but of great circumference; it lay so little above the sea level that one had a sense of insecurity; justified by the terrible disasters following the last hurricane in the group. Not far from where we lived the waves had recently swept over the narrow strip of coral during a storm.

Though we had before us the evidences of what had happened, and might happen again, our life on the island passed in a gentle monotony of peace. At sunrise we walked from our front door into the warm, shallow waters of the lagoon for our bath; we cooked our breakfast on the remains of an old American cooking-stove I discovered on the beach, and spent the rest of the morning sorting over the shells we had found the previous day. After lunch and a siesta, we crossed the island to the windward side and gathered more shells. Sometimes we would find the strangest fish stranded in pools between the rocks by the outgoing tide, many of them curiously shaped and brilliantly coloured; some of the most gorgeous were poisonous to eat, and capable of inflicting very unpleasant wounds with their fins. I remember our

captain suffered during all the remainder of our voyage from a numbness resembling paralysis, in one of his fingers that he had scratched while handling a strange fish with a beak like a parrot.

The close of the placid day marked the beginning of the most agreeable part of the twenty-four hours; it was the time of the moon, and the shadows that fell from the cocoanut leaves were so sharply defined that one involuntarily stepped over them. After a simple dinner, and a dip in the soft sea, we sat expectant of our invariable visitor, the governor of the island, M. Donat Rimareau. There were no white men on the island that I remember, it not being the season for pearl fishing, though now and again a schooner with its French captain would appear and disappear like a phantom ship.

While the days were almost intolerably hot, with the setting of the sun a gentle breeze sprang up, cooling the air to a comfortable temperature. We spent the evenings in the moonlight, sitting on our mattresses that were spread out on the verandah, the only chair being reserved for our guest. Our conversation with M. Rimareau, who was half Tahitian, and altogether delightful, was at first rather of the Shakespeare and musical glasses order, but after the recital of several Scottish legends—I remember particularly my husband's telling the story of Ticonderoga—the governor felt more at his ease, and gradually he became the narrator and we the spell-

bound listeners. Night after night we literally sat at his feet entranced and thrilled by stories of Tahiti and the Paumotus, always of a supernatural character.

There is a strange sect in Fakarava called The Whistlers, resembling the spiritualists of our country, but greater adepts. When M. Rimareau spoke of these people and their superstitions his voice sank almost to a whisper, and he cast fearful glances over his shoulder at the black shadows of the palms. "Who knows," said he, "how much truth there may be in it all? It is a strange country, and I, myself, have seen and heard things that are not to be explained away." I remember one of the stories was of the return of the soul of a dead child, the soul being wrapped in a leaf and dropped in at the door of the sorrowing parents.

I am sure that when my husband came to write *The Isle of Voices* he had our evenings in Fakarava and the stories of M. Rimareau in his mind. I know that I never read *The Isle of Voices* without a mental picture rising before me of the lagoon, and the cocoa palms, and the wonderful moonlight of Fakarava.

F. V. DE G. S.

TO
THREE OLD SHIPMATES
AMONG THE ISLANDS

Harry Henderson
Ben Hird
Jack Buckland
Their Friend
R. L. S.

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THE BEACH OF FALESÁ

BEING THE NARRATIVE OF A SOUTH SEA TRADER

CHAPTER I

A SOUTH SEA BRIDAL

SAW that island first when it was neither night nor morning. The moon was to the west, setting, but still broad and bright. To the east, and right amidships of the dawn, which was all pink, the daystar sparkled like a diamond. The land breeze blew in our faces, and smelt strong of wild lime and vanilla; other things besides, but these were the most plain; and the chill of it set me sneezing. I should say I had been for years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among natives. Here was a fresh experience; even the tongue would be quite strange to me; and the look of these woods and mountains, and the rare smell of them, renewed my blood.

The captain blew out the binnacle lamp.

"There!" said he, "there goes a bit of smoke, Mr. Wiltshire, behind the break of the reef. That's Falesá, where your station is, the last village to the east; nobody lives to windward—I don't know why. Take my glass, and you can make the houses out."

I took the glass; and the shores leaped nearer, and I saw the tangle of the woods and the breach of the surf, and the brown roofs and the black insides of houses peeped among the trees.

"Do you catch a bit of white there to the east'ard?" the captain continued. "That's your house. Coral built, stands high, verandah you could walk on three abreast; best station in the South Pacific. When old Adams saw it, he took and shook me by the hand. 'I've dropped into a soft thing here,' says he. 'So you have,' says I, 'and time too!' Poor Johnny! I never saw him again but the once, and then he had changed his tune—couldn't get on with the natives, or the whites, or something; and the next time we came round there, he was dead and buried. I took and put up a bit of a stick to him: 'John Adams, *obit* eighteen and sixty-eight. Go thou and do likewise.' I missed that man. I never could see much harm in Johnny."

"What did he die of?" I inquired.

"Some kind of sickness," says the captain. "It appears it took him sudden. Seems he got up in the night, and filled up on Pain Killer and Kennedy's Discovery. No go—he was booked

beyond Kennedy. Then he had tried to open a case of gin. No go again—not strong enough. Then he must have turned to and run out on the verandah, and capsized over the rail. When they found him, the next day, he was clean crazy—carried on all the time about somebody watering his copra. Poor John!"

"Was it thought to be the island?" I asked.

"Well, it was thought to be the island, or the trouble, or something," he replied. "I never could hear but what it was a healthy place. Our last man, Vigours, never turned a hair. He left because of the beach—said he was afraid of Black Jack and Case and Whistling Jimmie, who was still alive at the time, but got drowned soon afterward when drunk. As for old Captain Randall, he's been here any time since eighteen-forty, forty-five. I never could see much harm in Billy, nor much change. Seems as if he might live to be Old Kafoozleum. No, I guess it's healthy."

"There's a boat coming now," said I. "She's right in the pass; looks to be a sixteen-foot whale; two white men in the stern-sheets."

"That's the boat that drowned Whistling Jimmie!" cried the captain; "let's see the glass. Yes, that's Case, sure enough, and the darkie. They've got a gallows bad reputation, but you know what a place the beach is for talking. My belief, that Whistling Jimmie was the worst of the trouble; and he's gone to glory, you see.

What'll you bet they ain't after gin? Lay you five to two they take six cases."

When these two traders came aboard I was pleased with the looks of them at once, or, rather, with the looks of both, and the speech of one. I was sick for white neighbours after my four years at the line, which I always counted years of prison; getting tabooed, and going down to the Speak House to see and get it taken off; buying gin and going on a break, and then repenting; sitting in the house at night with the lamp for company; or walking on the beach and wondering what kind of a fool to call myself for being where I was. There were no other whites upon my island, and when I sailed to the next, rough customers made the most of the society. Now to see these two when they came aboard was a pleasure. One was a negro, to be sure; but they were both rigged out smart in striped pyjamas and straw hats, and Case would have passed muster in a city. He was yellow and smallish, had a hawk's nose to his face, pale eyes, and his beard trimmed with scissors. No man knew his country, beyond he was of English speech; and it was clear he came of a good family and was splendidly educated. He was accomplished too; played the accordion first rate; and give him a piece of a string or a cork or a pack of cards, and he could show you tricks equal to any professional. He could speak, when he chose, fit for a drawing-room; and when he chose he could

blaspheme worse than a Yankee boatswain, and talk smart to sicken a Kanaka. The way he thought would pay best at the moment, that was Case's way, and it always seemed to come natural, and like as if he was born to it. He had the courage of a lion and the cunning of a rat; and if he's not in hell to-day, there's no such place. I know but one good point to the man—that he was fond of his wife, and kind to her. She was a Samoa woman, and dyed her hair red—Samoa style; and when he came to die (as I have to tell of) they found one strange thing—that he had made a will, like a Christian, and the widow got the lot; all his, they said, and all Black Jack's, and the most of Billy Randall's in the bargain, for it was Case that kept the books. So she went off home in the schooner *Manu'a*, and does the lady to this day in her own place.

But of all this on the first morning I knew no more than a fly. Case used me like a gentleman and like a friend, made me welcome to Falesá, and put his services at my disposal, which was the more helpful from my ignorance of the natives. All the better part of the day we sat drinking better acquaintance in the cabin, and I never heard a man talk more to the point. There was no smarter trader, and none dodgier, in the islands. I thought Falesá seemed to be the right kind of a place; and the more I drank the lighter my heart. Our last trader had fled the place at half an hour's notice, taking a chance

passage in a labour ship from up west. The captain, when he came, had found the station closed, the keys left with the native pastor, and a letter from the runaway, confessing he was fairly frightened of his life. Since then the firm had not been represented, and of course there was no cargo. The wind, besides, was fair, the captain hoped he could make his next island by dawn, with a good tide, and the business of landing my trade was gone about lively. There was no call for me to fool with it, Case said; nobody would touch my things, every one was honest in Falesá, only about chickens or an odd knife or an odd stick of tobacco; and the best I could do was to sit quiet till the vessel left, then come straight to his house, see old Captain Randall, the father of the beach, take pot-luck, and go home to sleep when it got dark. So it was high noon, and the schooner was under way before I set my foot on shore at Falesá.

I had a glass or two on board; I was just off a long cruise, and the ground heaved under me like a ship's deck. The world was like all new painted; my foot went along to music; Falesá might have been Fiddler's Green, if there is such a place, and more's the pity if there isn't! It was good to foot the grass, to look aloft at the green mountains, to see the men with their green wreaths and the women in their bright dresses, red and blue. On we went, in the strong sun and the cool shadow, liking both; and all the

children in the town came trotting after with their shaven heads and their brown bodies, and raising a thin kind of a cheer in our wake, like crowing poultry.

"By the by," says Case, "we must get you a wife."

"That's so," said I; "I had forgotten."

There was a crowd of girls about us, and I pulled myself up and looked among them like a bashaw. They were all dressed out for the sake of the ship being in; and the women of Falesá are a handsome lot to see. If they have a fault, they are a trifle broad in the beam; and I was just thinking so when Case touched me.

"That's pretty," says he.

I saw one coming on the other side alone. She had been fishing; all she wore was a chemise, and it was wetted through. She was young and very slender for an island maid, with a long face, a high forehead, and a shy, strange, blindish look, between a cat's and a baby's.

"Who's she?" said I. "She'll do."

"That's Uma," said Case, and he called her up and spoke to her in the native. I didn't know what he said; but when he was in the midst she looked up at me quick and timid, like a child dodging a blow, then down again, and presently smiled. She had a wide mouth, the lips and the chin cut like any statue's; and the smile came out for a moment and was gone. Then she stood with her head bent, and heard Case to an end,

spoke back in the pretty Polynesian voice, looking him full in the face, heard him again in answer, and then with an obeisance started off. I had just a share of the bow, but never another shot of her eye, and there was no more word of smiling.

"I guess it's all right," said Case. "I guess you can have her. I'll make it square with the old lady. You can have your pick of the lot for a plug of tobacco," he added, sneering.

I suppose it was the smile that stuck in my memory, for I spoke back sharp. "She doesn't look that sort," I cried.

"I don't know that she is," said Case. "I believe she's as right as the mail. Keeps to herself, don't go round with the gang, and that. Oh, no, don't you misunderstand me—Uma's on the square." He spoke eager, I thought, and that surprised and pleased me. "Indeed," he went on, "I shouldn't make so sure of getting her, only she cottoned to the cut of your jib. All you have to do is to keep dark and let me work the mother my own way; and I'll bring the girl round to the captain's for the marriage."

I didn't care for the word marriage, and I said so.

"Oh, there's nothing to hurt in the marriage," says he. "Black Jack's the chaplain."

By this time we had come in view of the house of these three white men; for a negro is counted a white man, and so is a Chinese! A strange

idea, but common in the islands. It was a board house with a strip of rickety verandah. The store was to the front, with a counter, scales, and the finest possible display of trade: a case or two of tinned meats; a barrel of hard bread, a few bolts of cotton stuff, not to be compared with mine; the only thing well represented being the contraband firearms and liquor. "If these are my only rivals," thinks I, "I should do well in Falesá." Indeed, there was only the one way they could touch me, and that was with the guns and drink.

In the back room was old Captain Randall, squatting on the floor native fashion, fat and pale, naked to the waist, grey as a badger, and his eyes set with drink. His body was covered with grey hair and crawled over by flies; one was in the corner of his eye—he never heeded; and the mosquitoes hummed about the man like bees. Any clean-minded man would have had the creature out at once and buried him; and to see him, and think he was seventy, and remember he had once commanded a ship, and come ashore in his smart togs, and talked big in bars and consulates, and sat in club verandahs, turned me sick and sober.

He tried to get up when I came in, but that was hopeless; so he reached me a hand instead, and stumbled out some salutation.

"Papa's[1] pretty full this morning," observed

[1] Please pronounce *pappa* throughout.

Case. "We've had an epidemic here; and Captain Randall takes gin for a prophylactic—don't you, Papa?"

"Never took such a thing in my life!" cried the captain, indignantly. "Take gin for my health's sake, Mr. Wha's-ever-your-name—'s a precautionary measure."

"That's all right, Papa," said Case. "But you'll have to brace up. There's going to be a marriage—Mr. Wiltshire here is going to get spliced."

The old man asked to whom.

"To Uma," said Case.

"Uma!" cried the captain. "Wha's he want Uma for? 's he come here for his health, anyway? Wha' 'n hell's he want Uma for?"

"Dry up, Papa," said Case. "'Tain't you that's to marry her. I guess you're not her godfather and godmother. I guess Mr. Wiltshire's going to please himself."

With that he made an excuse to me that he must move about the marriage, and left me alone with the poor wretch that was his partner and (to speak truth) his gull. Trade and station belonged both to Randall; Case and the negro were parasites; they crawled and fed upon him like the flies, he none the wiser. Indeed, I have no harm to say of Billy Randall beyond the fact that my gorge rose at him, and the time I now passed in his company was like a nightmare.

The room was stifling hot and full of flies; for

the house was dirty and low and small, and stood in a bad place, behind the village, in the borders of the bush, and sheltered from the trade. The three men's beds were on the floor, and a litter of pans and dishes. There was no standing furniture; Randall, when he was violent, tearing it to laths. There I sat and had a meal which was served us by Case's wife; and there I was entertained all day by that remains of man, his tongue stumbling among low old jokes and long old stories, and his own wheezy laughter always ready, so that he had no sense of my depression. He was nipping gin all the while. Sometimes he fell asleep, and awoke again, whimpering and shivering, and every now and again he would ask me why I wanted to marry Uma. "My friend," I was telling myself all day, "you must not come to be an old gentleman like this."

It might be four in the afternoon, perhaps, when the back door was thrust slowly open, and a strange old native woman crawled into the house almost on her belly. She was swathed in black stuff to her heels; her hair was grey in swatches; her face was tattooed, which was not the practice in that island; her eyes big and bright and crazy. These she fixed upon me with a rapt expression that I saw to be part acting. She said no plain word, but smacked and mumbled with her lips, and hummed aloud, like a child over its Christmas pudding. She came straight across the house, heading for me, and,

as soon as she was alongside, caught up my hand and purred and crooned over it like a great cat. From this she slipped into a kind of song.

"Who the devil's this?" cried I, for the thing startled me.

"It's Fa'avao," says Randall; and I saw he had hitched along the floor into the farthest corner.

"You ain't afraid of her?" I cried.

"Me 'fraid!" cried the captain. "My dear friend, I defy her! I don't let her put her foot in here, only I suppose's different to-day for the marriage. 's Uma's mother."

"Well, suppose it is; what's she carrying on about?" I asked, more irritated, perhaps more frightened, than I cared to show; and the captain told me she was making up a quantity of poetry in my praise because I was to marry Uma. "All right, old lady," says I, with rather a failure of a laugh, "anything to oblige. But when you're done with my hand, you might let me know."

She did as though she understood; the song rose into a cry, and stopped; the woman crouched out of the house the same way that she came in, and must have plunged straight into the bush, for when I followed her to the door she had already vanished.

"These are rum manners," said I.

" 's a rum crowd," said the captain, and, to my surprise, he made the sign of the cross on his bare bosom.

"Hillo!" says I, "are you a Papist?"

He repudiated the idea with contempt. "Hard-shell Baptis'," said he. "But, my deaf friend, the Papists got some good ideas too; and tha' 's one of 'em. You take my advice, and whenever you come across Uma or Fa'avao or Vigours, or any of that crowd, you take a lear out o' the priests, and do what I do. Savvy?" says he, repeated the sign, and winked his dim eye at me. "No, *sir!*" he broke out again, "no Papists here!" and for a long time entertained me with his religious opinions.

I must have been taken with Uma from the first, or I should certainly have fled from that house, and got into the clean air, and the clean sea, or some convenient river—though, it's true, I was committed to Case; and, besides, I could never have held my head up in that island if I had run from a girl upon my wedding-night.

The sun was down, the sky all on fire, and the lamp had been some time lighted, when Case came back with Uma and the negro. She was dressed and scented; her kilt was of fine tapa, looking richer in the folds than any silk; her bust, which was of the colour of dark honey, she wore bare, only for some half a dozen necklaces of seeds and flowers; and behind her ears and in her hair she had the scarlet flowers of the hibiscus. She showed the best bearing for a bride conceivable, serious and still; and I thought shame to stand up with her in that mean house

and before that grinning negro. I thought shame, I say; for the mountebank was dressed with a big paper collar, the book he made believe to read from was an odd volume of a novel, and the words of his service not fit to be set down. My conscience smote me when we joined hands; and when she got her certificate I was tempted to throw up the bargain and confess. Here is the document. It was Case that wrote it, signatures and all, in a leaf out of the ledger:

> This is to certify that Uma, daughter of Fa'avao of Falesá, Island of ——, is illegally married to Mr. John Wiltshire for one week, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell when he pleases.
>
> JOHN BLACKAMOAR,
> Chaplain to the Hulks.
>
> Extracted from the Register
> by William T. Randall,
> Master Mariner.

A nice paper to put in a girl's hand and see her hide away like gold. A man might easily feel cheap for less. But it was the practice in these parts, and (as I told myself) not the least the fault of us white men, but of the missionaries. If they had let the natives be, I had never needed this deception, but taken all the wives I wished and left them when I pleased, with a clear conscience.

The more ashamed I was, the more hurry I was in to be gone; and our desires thus jumping together, I made the less remark of a change in

the traders. Case had been all eagerness to keep me; now, as though he had attained a purpose, he seemed all eagerness to have me go. Uma, he said, could show me to my house, and the three bade us farewell indoors.

The night was nearly come; the village smelt of trees and flowers and the sea and bread-fruit-cooking; there came a fine roll of sea from the reef, and from a distance, among the woods and houses, many pretty sounds of men and children. It did me good to breathe free air; it did me good to be done with the captain, and see, instead, the creature at my side. I felt for all the world as though she were some girl at home in the Old Country, and forgetting myself for the minute, took her hand to walk with. Her fingers nestled into mine, I heard her breathe deep and quick, and all at once she caught my hand to her face and pressed it there. "You good!" she cried, and ran ahead of me, and stopped and looked back and smiled, and ran ahead of me again, thus guiding me through the edge of the bush, and by a quiet way to my own house.

The truth is, Case had done the courting for me in style—told her I was mad to have her, and cared nothing for the consequences; and the poor soul, knowing that which I was still ignorant of, believed it, every word, and had her head nigh turned with vanity and gratitude. Now, of all this I had no guess; I was one of those most opposed to any nonsense about native women,

having seen so many whites eaten up by their wives' relatives, and made fools of into the bargain; and I told myself I must make a stand at once, and bring her to her bearings. But she looked so quaint and pretty as she ran away and then awaited me, and the thing was done so like a child or a kind dog, that the best I could do was just to follow her whenever she went on, to listen for the fall of her bare feet, and to watch in the dusk for the shining of her body. And there was another thought came in my head. She played kitten with me now when we were alone; but in the house she had carried it the way a countess might, so proud and humble. And what with her dress—for all there was so little of it, and that native enough—what with her fine tapa and fine scents, and her red flowers and seeds, that were quite as bright as jewels, only larger—it came over me she was a kind of countess really, dressed to hear great singers at a concert, and no even mate for a poor trader like myself.

She was the first in the house; and while I was still without I saw a match flash and the lamplight kindle in the windows. The station was a wonderful fine place, coral built, with quite a wide verandah, and the main room high and wide. My chests and cases had been piled in, and made rather of a mess; and there, in the thick of the confusion, stood Uma by the table, awaiting me. Her shadow went all the way up behind

her into the hollow of the iron roof; she stood against it bright, the lamplight shining on her skin. I stopped in the door, and she looked at me, not speaking, with eyes that were eager and yet daunted; then she touched herself on the bosom.

"Me—your wifie," she said. It had never taken me like that before; but the want of her took and shook all through me, like the wind in the luff of a sail.

I could not speak if I had wanted; and if I could, I would not. I was ashamed to be so much moved about a native, ashamed of the marriage too, and the certificate she had treasured in her kilt; and I turned aside and made believe to rummage among my cases. The first thing I lighted on was a case of gin, the only one that I had brought; and partly for the girl's sake and partly for horror of the recollections of old Randall, took a sudden resolve. I pried the lid off. One by one I drew the bottles with a pocket corkscrew, and sent Uma out to pour the stuff from the verandah.

She came back after the last, and looked at me puzzled like.

"No good," said I, for I was now a little better master of my tongue. "Man he drink, he no good."

She agreed with this, but kept considering. "Why you bring him?" she asked presently. "Suppose you no want drink, you no bring him, I think."

"That's all right," said I. "One time I want drink too much; now no want. You see, I no savvy I get one little wifie. Suppose I drink gin, my little wifie be 'fraid."

To speak to her kindly was about more than I was fit for; I had made my vow I would never let on to weakness with a native, and I had nothing for it but to stop.

She stood looking gravely down at me where I sat by the open case. "I think you good man," she said. And suddenly she had fallen before me on the floor. "I belong you all-e-same pig!" she cried.

CHAPTER II

THE BAN

I CAME on the verandah just before the sun rose on the morrow. My house was the last on the east; there was a cape of woods and cliffs behind that hid the sunrise. To the west, a swift, cold river ran down, and beyond was the green of the village, dotted with cocoa-palms and bread-fruits and houses. The shutters were some of them down and some open; I saw the mosquito bars still stretched with shadows of people new-awakened sitting up inside; and all over the green others were stalking silent, wrapped in their many-coloured sleeping clothes, like Bedouins in Bible pictures. It was mortal still and solemn and chilly, and the light of the dawn on the lagoon was like the shining of a fire.

But the thing that troubled me was nearer hand. Some dozen young men and children made a piece of a half-circle, flanking my house: the river divided them, some were on the near side, some on the far, and one on a boulder in the midst; and they all sat silent, wrapped in their sheets, and stared at me and my house as

straight as pointer dogs. I thought it strange as I went out. When I had bathed and come back again, and found them all there, and two or three more along with them, I thought it stranger still. What could they see to gaze at in my house, I wondered, and went in.

But the thought of these starers stuck in my mind, and presently I came out again. The sun was now up, but it was still behind the cape of woods. Say a quarter of an hour had come and gone. The crowd was greatly increased, the far bank of the river was lined for quite a way—perhaps thirty grown folk, and of children twice as many, some standing, some squatted on the ground, and all staring at my house. I have seen a house in a South Sea village thus surrounded, but then a trader was thrashing his wife inside, and she singing out. Here was nothing—the stove was alight, the smoke going up in a Christian manner; all was shipshape and Bristol fashion. To be sure, there was a stranger come, but they had a chance to see that stranger yesterday, and took it quiet enough. What ailed them now? I leaned my arms on the rail and stared back. Devil a wink they had in them! Now and then I could see the children chatter, but they spoke so low not even the hum of their speaking came my length. The rest were like graven images: they stared at me, dumb and sorrowful, with their bright eyes; and it came upon me things would look not much

different if I were on the platform of the gallows and these good folk had come to see me hanged.

I felt I was getting daunted, and began to be afraid I looked it, which would never do. Up I stood, made believe to stretch myself, came down the verandah stair, and strolled towards the river. There went a short buzz from one to the other, like what you hear in theatres when the curtain goes up; and some of the nearest gave back the matter of a pace. I saw a girl lay one hand on a young man and make a gesture upward with the other; at the same time she said something in the native with a gasping voice. Three little boys sat beside my path, where I must pass within three feet of them. Wrapped in their sheets with their shaved heads and bits of top-knots, and queer faces, they looked like figures on a chimney-piece. A while they sat their ground, solemn as judges. I came up hand over fist, doing my five knots, like a man that meant business; and I thought I saw a sort of a wink and gulp in the three faces. Then one jumped up (he was the farthest off) and ran for his mammy. The other two, trying to follow suit, got foul, came to the ground together bawling, wriggled right out of their sheets, and in a moment there were all three of them scampering for their lives, and singing out like pigs. The natives, who would never let a joke slip, even at a burial, laughed and let up, as short as a dog's bark.

They say it scares a man to be alone. No such thing. What scares him in the dark or the high bush is that he can't make sure, and there might be an army at his elbow. What scares him worst is to be right in the midst of a crowd, and have no guess of what they're driving at. When that laugh stopped, I stopped too. The boys had not yet made their offing; they were still on the full stretch going the one way, when I had already gone about ship and was sheering off the other. Like a fool I had come out, doing my five knots; like a fool I went back again. It must have been the funniest thing to see, and what knocked me silly, this time no one laughed; only one old woman gave a kind of pious moan, the way you have heard Dissenters in their chapels at the sermon.

"I never saw such fools of Kanakas as your people here," I said once to Uma, glancing out of the window at the starers.

"Savvy nothing," says Uma, with a kind of disgusted air that she was good at.

And that was all the talk we had upon the matter, for I was put out, and Uma took the thing so much as a matter of course that I was fairly ashamed.

All day, off and on, now fewer and now more, the fools sat about the west end of my house and across the river, waiting for the show, whatever that was—fire to come down from heaven, I suppose, and consume me, bones and baggage.

But by evening, like real islanders, they had wearied of the business, and got away, and had a dance instead in the big house of the village, where I heard them singing and clapping hands till, maybe, ten at night, and the next day it seemed they had forgotten I existed. If fire had come down from heaven or the earth opened and swallowed me, there would have been nobody to see the sport or take the lesson, or whatever you like to call it. But I was to find they hadn't forgot either, and kept an eye lifting for phenomena over my way.

I was hard at it these days both getting my trade in order and taking stock of what Vigours had left. This was a job that made me pretty sick, and kept me from thinking on much else. Ben had taken stock the trip before—I knew I could trust Ben—but it was plain somebody had been making free in the meantime. I found I was out by what might easily cover six-months' salary and profit, and I could have kicked myself all round the village to have been such a blamed ass, sitting boozing with that Case instead of attending to my own affairs and taking stock.

However, there's no use crying over spilt milk. It was done now, and couldn't be undone. All I could do was to get what was left of it, and my new stuff (my own choice) in order, to go round and get after the rats and cockroaches, and to fix up that store regular Sydney style.

A fine show I made of it; and the third morning, when I had lit my pipe and stood in the doorway and looked in, and turned and looked far up the mountain and saw the cocoanuts waving and posted up the tons of copra, and over the village green and saw the island dandies and reckoned up the yards of print they wanted for their kilts and dresses, I felt as if I was in the right place to make a fortune, and go home again and start a public-house. There was I, sitting in that verandah, in as handsome a piece of scenery as you could find, a splendid sun, and a fine, fresh, healthy trade that stirred up a man's blood like sea-bathing; and the whole thing was clean gone from me, and I was dreaming England, which is, after all, a nasty, cold, muddy hole, with not enough light to see to read by; and dreaming the looks of my public, by a cant of a broad high-road like an avenue and with the sign on a green tree.

So much for the morning, but the day passed and the devil any one looked near me, and from all I knew of natives in other islands I thought this strange. People laughed a little at our firm and their fine stations, and at this station of Falesá in particular; all the copra in the district wouldn't pay for it (I heard them say) in fifty years, which I suppose was an exaggeration. But when the day went, and no business came at all, I began to get downhearted; and, about three in the afternoon, I went out for a stroll

to cheer me up. On the green I saw a white man coming with a cassock on, by which and by the face of him I knew he was a priest. He was a good-natured old soul to look at, gone a little grizzled, and so dirty you could have written with him on a piece of paper.

"Good-day, sir," said I.

He answered me eagerly in native.

"Don't you speak any English?" said I.

"French," says he.

"Well," said I, "I'm sorry, but I can't do anything there."

He tried me a while in the French, and then again in native, which he seemed to think was the best chance. I made out he was after more than passing the time of day with me, but had something to communicate, and I listened the harder. I heard the names of Adams and Case and of Randall—Randall the oftenest—and the word "poison," or something like it, and a native word that he said very often. I went home, repeating it to myself.

"What does fussy-ocky mean?" I asked of Uma, for that was as near as I could come to it.

"Make dead," said she.

"The devil it does!" says I. "Did ever you hear that Case had poisoned Johnny Adams?"

"Every man he savvy that," says Uma, scornful-like. "Give him white sand—bad sand. He got the bottle still. Suppose he give you gin, you no take him."

Now I had heard much of the same sort of story in other islands, and the same white powder always to the front, which made me think the less of it. For all that, I went over to Randall's place to see what I could pick up, and found Case on the doorstep, cleaning a gun.

"Good shooting here?" says I.

"A 1," says he. "The bush is full of all kinds of birds. I wish copra was as plenty," says he —I thought, slyly—"but there don't seem anything doing."

I could see Black Jack in the store, serving a customer.

"That looks like business, though," said I.

"That's the first sale we've made in three weeks," said he.

"You don't tell me?" says I. "Three weeks? Well, well."

"If you don't believe me," he cries, a little hot, "you can go and look at the copra-house. It's half empty to this blessed hour."

"I shouldn't be much the better for that, you see," says I. "For all I can tell, it might have been whole empty yesterday."

"That's so," says he, with a bit of a laugh.

"By the by," I said, "what sort of a party is that priest? Seems rather a friendly sort."

At this Case laughed right out loud. "Ah!" says he, "I see what ails you now. Galuchet's been at you." *Father Galoshes* was the name he went by most, but Case always gave it the

French quirk, which was another reason we had for thinking him above the common.

"Yes, I have seen him," I says. "I made out he didn't think much of your Captain Randall."

"That he don't!" says Case. "It was the trouble about poor Adams. The last day, when he lay dying, there was young Buncombe round. Ever met Buncombe?"

I told him no.

"He's a cure, is Buncombe!" laughs Case. "Well, Buncombe took it in his head that, as there was no other clergyman about, bar Kanaka pastors, we ought to call in Father Galuchet, and have the old man administered and take the sacrament. It was all the same to me, you may suppose; but I said I thought Adams was the fellow to consult. He was jawing away about watered copra and a sight of foolery. 'Look here,' I said, 'you're pretty sick. Would you like to see Galoshes?' He sat right up on his elbow. 'Get the priest,' says he, 'get the priest; don't let me die here like a dog!' He spoke kind of fierce and eager, but sensible enough. There was nothing to say against that, so we sent and asked Galuchet if he would come. You bet he would. He jumped in his dirty linen at the thought of it. But we had reckoned without Papa. He's a hard-shelled Baptist, is Papa; no Papists need apply. And he took and locked the door. Buncombe told him he was bigoted,

and I thought he would have had a fit. 'Bigoted!' he says. 'Me bigoted? Have I lived to hear it from a jackanapes like you?' And he made for Buncombe, and I had to hold them apart; and there was Adams in the middle, gone luny again, and carrying on about copra like a born fool. It was good as the play, and I was about knocked out of time with laughing, when all of a sudden Adams sat up, clapped his hands to his chest, and went into the horrors. He died hard, did John Adams," says Case, with a kind of a sudden sternness.

"And what became of the priest?" I asked.

"The priest?" says Case. "Oh! he was hammering on the door outside, and crying on the natives to come and beat it in, and singing out it was a soul he wished to save, and that. He was in a rare taking, was the priest. But what would you have? Johnny had slipped his cable; no more Johnny in the market; and the administration racket clean played out. Next thing, word came to Randall that the priest was praying upon Johnny's grave. Papa was pretty full, and got a club, and lit out straight for the place, and there was Galoshes on his knees, and a lot of natives looking on. You wouldn't think Papa cared that much about anything, unless it was liquor; but he and the priest stuck to it two hours, slanging each other in native, and every time Galoshes tried to kneel down Papa went for him with a club. There never were such

larks in Falesá. The end of it was that Captain Randall knocked over with some kind of a fit or stroke, and the priest got in his goods after all. But he was the angriest priest you ever heard of, and complained to the chiefs about the outrage, as he called it. That was no account, for our chiefs are Protestant here; and, anyway, he had been making trouble about the drum for morning school, and they were glad to give him a wipe. Now he swears old Randall gave Adams poison or something, and when the two meet they grin at each other like baboons."

He told this story as natural as could be, and like a man that enjoyed the fun; though now I come to think of it after so long, it seems rather a sickening yarn. However, Case never set up to be soft, only to be square and hearty, and a man all round; and, to tell the truth, he puzzled me entirely.

I went home and asked Uma if she were a Popey, which I made out to be the native word for Catholics.

"*E le ai!*" says she. She always used the native when she meant "no" more than usually strong, and, indeed, there's more of it. "No good Popey," she added.

Then I asked her about Adams and the priest, and she told me much the same yarn in her own way. So that I was left not much further on, but inclined, upon the whole, to think the bot-

tom of the matter was the row about sacrament, and the poisoning only talk.

The next day was a Sunday, when there was no business to be looked for. Uma asked me in the morning if I was going to "pray"; I told her she bet not, and she stopped home herself, with no more words. I thought this seemed unlike a native, and a native woman, and a woman that had new clothes to show off; however, it suited me to the ground, and I made the less of it. The queer thing was that I came next door to going to church after all, a thing I'm little likely to forget. I had turned out for a stroll, and heard the hymn tune up. You know how it is. If you hear folk singing, it seems to draw you; and pretty soon I found myself alongside the church. It was a little, long, low place, coral built, rounded off at both ends like a whale-boat, a big native roof on the top of it, windows without sashes and doorways without doors. I stuck my head into one of the windows, and the sight was so new to me—for things went quite different in the islands I was acquainted with—that I stayed and looked on. The congregation sat on the floor on mats, the women on one side, the men on the other, all rigged out to kill—the women with dresses and trade hats, the men in white jackets and shirts. The hymn was over; the pastor, a big buck Kanaka, was in the pulpit, preaching for his life; and by the way he wagged his hand, and worked his voice, and

made his points, and seemed to argue with the folk, I made out he was a gun at the business. Well, he looked up suddenly and caught my eye, and I give you my word he staggered in the pulpit; his eyes bulged out of his head, his hand rose and pointed at me like as if against his will, and the sermon stopped right there.

It isn't a fine thing to say for yourself, but I ran away; and if the same kind of a shock was given me, I should run away again to-morrow. To see that palavering Kanaka struck all of a heap at the mere sight of me gave me a feeling as if the bottom had dropped out of the world. I went right home, and stayed there, and said nothing. You might think I would tell Uma, but that was against my system. You might have thought I would have gone over and consulted Case; but the truth was I was ashamed to speak of such a thing, I thought every one would blurt out laughing in my face. So I held my tongue, and thought all the more; and the more I thought, the less I liked the business.

By Monday night I got it clearly in my head I must be tabooed. A new store to stand open two days in a village and not a man or woman come to see the trade, was past believing.

"Uma," said I, "I think I'm tabooed."

"I think so," said she.

I thought a while whether I should ask her more, but it's a bad idea to set natives up with any notion of consulting them, so I went to Case.

It was dark, and he was sitting alone, as he did mostly, smoking on the stairs.

"Case," said I, "here's a queer thing. I'm tabooed."

"Oh, fudge!" says he; "tain't the practice in these islands."

"That may be, or it mayn't," said I. "It's the practice where I was before. You can bet I know what it's like; and I tell it you for a fact, I'm tabooed."

"Well," said he, "what have you been doing?"

"That's what I want to find out," said I.

"Oh, you can't be," said he; "it ain't possible. However, I'll tell you what I'll do. Just to put your mind at rest, I'll go round and find out for sure. Just you waltz in and talk to Papa."

"Thank you," I said, "I'd rather stay right out here on the verandah. Your house is so close."

"I'll call Papa out here, then," says he.

"My dear fellow," I says, "I wish you wouldn't. The fact is, I don't take to Mr. Randall."

Case laughed, took a lantern from the store, and set out into the village. He was gone perhaps a quarter of an hour, and he looked mighty serious when he came back.

"Well," said he, clapping down the lantern on the verandah steps, "I would never have believed it. I don't know where the impudence of these Kanakas'll go next; they seem to have lost all

idea of respect for whites. What we want is a man-of-war—a German, if we could—they know how to manage Kanakas."

"I *am* tabooed then?" I cried.

"Something of the sort," said he. "It's the worst thing of the kind I've heard of yet. But I'll stand by you, Wiltshire, man to man. You come round here to-morrow about nine, and we'll have it out with the chiefs. They're afraid of me, or they used to be; but their heads are so big by now, I don't know what to think. Understand me, Wiltshire; I don't count this your quarrel," he went on, with a great deal of resolution, "I count it all of our quarrel, I count it the White Man's Quarrel, and I'll stand to it through thick and thin, and there's my hand on it."

"Have you found out what's the reason?" I asked.

"Not yet," said Case. "But we'll fire them down to-morrow."

Altogether I was pretty well pleased with his attitude, and almost more the next day, when we met to go before the chiefs, to see him so stern and resolved. The chiefs awaited us in one of their big oval houses, which was marked out to us from a long way off by the crowd about the eaves, a hundred strong if there was one—men, women, and children. Many of the men were on their way to work and wore green wreaths, and it put me in thoughts of the first of May at home. This crowd opened and buzzed about the pair of

us as we went in, with a sudden angry animation. Five chiefs were there; four mighty, stately men, the fifth old and puckered. They sat on mats in their white kilts and jackets; they had fans in their hands, like fine ladies; and two of the younger ones wore Catholic medals, which gave me matter of reflection. Our place was set, and the mats laid for us over against these grandees, on the near side of the house; the midst was empty; the crowd, close at our backs, murmured and craned and jostled to look on, and the shadows of them tossed in front of us on the clean pebbles on the floor. I was just a hair put out by the excitement of the commons, but the quiet, civil appearance of the chiefs reassured me, all the more when their spokesman began and made a long speech in a low tone of voice, sometimes waving his hand towards Case, sometimes towards me, and sometimes knocking with his knuckles on the mat. One thing was clear: there was no sign of anger in the chiefs.

"What's he been saying?" I asked, when he had done.

"Oh, just that they're glad to see you, and they understand by me you wish to make some kind of complaint, and you're to fire away, and they'll do the square thing."

"It took a precious long time to say that," said I.

"Oh, the rest was sawder and *bonjour* and that," said Case. "You know what Kanakas are."

"Well, they don't get much *bonjour* out of me," said I. "You tell them who I am. I'm a white man, and a British subject, and no end of a big chief at home; and I've come here to do them good, and bring them civilisation; and no sooner have I got my trade sorted out than they go and taboo me, and no one dare come near my place! Tell them I don't mean to fly in the face of anything legal; and if what they want's a present, I'll do what's fair. I don't blame any man looking out for himself, tell them, for that's human nature; but if they think they're going to come any of their native ideas over me, they'll find themselves mistaken. And tell them plain that I demand the reason of this treatment as a white man and a British subject."

That was my speech. I knew how to deal with Kanakas: give them plain sense and fair dealing, and—I'll do them that much justice—they knuckle under every time. They haven't any real government or any real law, that's what you've got to knock into their heads; and even if they had, it would be a good joke if it was to apply to a white man. It would be a strange thing if we came all this way and couldn't do what we pleased. The mere idea has always put my monkey up, and I rapped my speech out pretty big. Then Case translated it—or made believe to, rather—and the first chief replied, and then a second, and a third, all in the same style—easy and genteel, but solemn underneath.

Once a question was put to Case, and he answered it, and all hands (both chiefs and commons) laughed out aloud, and looked at me. Last of all, the puckered old fellow and the big young chief that spoke first started in to put Case through a kind of catechism. Sometimes I made out that Case was trying to fence, and they stuck to him like hounds, and the sweat ran down his face, which was no very pleasant sight to me, and at some of his answers the crowd moaned and murmured, which was a worse hearing. It's a cruel shame I knew no native, for (as I now believe) they were asking Case about my marriage, and he must have had a tough job of it to clear his feet. But leave Case alone; he had the brains to run a parliament.

"Well, is that all?" I asked, when a pause came.

"Come along," says he, mopping his face; "I'll tell you outside."

"Do you mean they won't take the taboo off?" I cried.

"It's something queer," said he. "I'll tell you outside. Better come away."

"I won't take it at their hands," cried I. "I ain't that kind of a man. You don't find me turn my back on a parcel of Kanakas."

"You'd better," said Case.

He looked at me with a signal in his eye; and the five chiefs looked at me civilly enough, but kind of pointed; and the people looked at me

and craned and jostled. I remembered the folks that watched my house, and how the pastor had jumped in his pulpit at the bare sight of me; and the whole business seemed so out of the way that I rose and followed Case. The crowd opened again to let us through, but wider than before, the children on the skirts running and singing out, and as we two white men walked away they all stood and watched us.

"And now," said I, "what is all this about?"

"The truth is I can't rightly make it out myself. They have a down on you," says Case.

"Taboo a man because they have a down on him!" I cried. "I never heard the like."

"It's worse than that, you see," said Case. "You ain't tabooed—I told you that couldn't be. The people won't go near you, Wiltshire, and there's where it is."

"They won't go near me? What do you mean by that? Why won't they go near me?" I cried.

Case hesitated. "Seems they're frightened," says he, in a low voice.

I stopped dead short. "Frightened?" I repeated. "Are you gone crazy, Case? What are they frightened of?"

"I wish I could make out," Case answered, shaking his head. "Appears like one of their tomfool superstitions. That's what I don't cotton to," he said. "It's like the business about Vigours."

"I'd like to know what you mean by that, and I'll trouble you to tell me," says I.

"Well, you know, Vigours lit out and left all standing," said he. "It was some superstition business—I never got the hang of it; but it began to look bad before the end."

"I've heard a different story about that," said I, "and I had better tell you so. I heard he ran away because of you."

"Oh! well, I suppose he was ashamed to tell the truth," says Case; "I guess he thought it silly. And it's a fact that I packed him off. 'What would you do, old man?' says he. 'Get,' says I, 'and not think twice about it.' I was the gladdest kind of man to see him clear away. It ain't my notion to turn my back on a mate when he's in a tight place, but there was that much trouble in the village that I couldn't see where it might likely end. I was a fool to be so much about with Vigours. They cast it up to me to-day. Didn't you hear Maea—that's the young chief, the big one—ripping out about 'Vika'? That was him they were after. They don't seem to forget it, somehow."

"This is all very well," said I, "but it don't tell me what's wrong; it don't tell me what they're afraid of—what their idea is."

"Well, I wish I knew," said Case. "I can't say fairer than that."

"You might have asked, I think," says I.

"And so I did," says he. "But you must

have seen for yourself, unless you're blind, that the asking got the other way. I'll go as far as I dare for another white man; but when I find I'm in the scrape myself, I think first of my own bacon. The loss of me is I'm too good-natured. And I'll take the freedom of telling you you show a queer kind of gratitude to a man who's got into all this mess along of your affairs."

"There's a thing I'm thinking of," said I. "You were a fool to be so much about with Vigours. One comfort, you haven't been much about with me. I notice you've never been inside my house. Own up now; you had word of this before?"

"It's a fact I haven't been," said he. "It was an oversight, and I am sorry for it, Wiltshire. But about coming now, I'll be quite plain."

"You mean you won't?" I asked.

"Awfully sorry, old man, but that's the size of it," says Case.

"In short, you're afraid?" says I.

"In short, I'm afraid," says he.

"And I'm still to be tabooed for nothing?" I asked.

"I tell you you're not tabooed," said he. "The Kanakas won't go near you, that's all. And who's to make 'em? We traders have a lot of gall, I must say; we make these poor Kanakas take back their laws, and take up their taboos, and that, whenever it happens to suit us. But you don't mean to say you expect a law obliging

people to deal in your store whether they want to or not? You don't mean to tell me you've got the gall for that? And if you had, it would be a queer thing to propose to me. I would just like to point out to you, Wiltshire, that I'm a trader myself."

"I don't think I would talk of gall if I was you," said I. "Here's about what it comes to, as well as I can make out: None of the people are to trade with me, and they're all to trade with you. You're to have the copra, and I'm to go to the devil and shake myself. And I don't know any native, and you're the only man here worth mention that speaks English, and you have the gall to up and hint to me my life's in danger, and all you've got to tell me is you don't know why!"

"Well, it *is* all I have to tell you," said he. "I don't know—I wish I did."

"And so you turn your back and leave me to myself! Is that the position?" says I.

"If you like to put it nasty," says he. "I don't put it so. I say merely, 'I'm going to keep clear of you; or, if I don't I'll get in danger for myself.'"

"Well," says I, "you're a nice kind of a white man!"

"Oh, I understand; you're riled," said he. "I would be myself. I can make excuses."

"All right," I said, "go and make excuses somewhere else. Here's my way, there's yours!"

With that we parted, and I went straight

home, in a hot temper and found Uma trying on a lot of trade goods like a baby.

"Here," I said, "you quit that foolery! Here's pretty mess to have made, as if I wasn't bothered enough anyway! And I thought I told you to get dinner!"

And then I believe I gave her a bit of the rough side of my tongue, as she deserved. She stood up at once, like a sentry to his officer; for I must say she was always well brought up, and had a great respect for whites.

"And now," says I, "you belong round here, you're bound to understand this. What am I tabooed for, anyway? Or, if I ain't tabooed, what makes the folks afraid of me?"

She stood and looked at me with eyes like saucers.

"You no savvy?" she gasps at last.

"No," said I. "How would you expect me to? We don't have any such craziness where I come from."

"Ese no tell you?" she asked again.

(*Ese* was the name the natives had for Case; it may mean foreign, or extraordinary; or it might mean a mummy apple; but most like it was only his own name misheard and put in a Kanaka spelling.)

"Not much," said I.

"Damn Ese!" she cried.

You might think it funny to hear this Kanaka girl come out with a big swear. No such thing.

There was no swearing in her—no, nor anger; she was beyond anger, and meant the word simple and serious. She stood there straight as she said it. I cannot justly say that I ever saw a woman look like that before or after, and it struck me mum. Then she made a kind of an obeisance, but it was the proudest kind, and threw her hands out open.

"I 'shamed," she said. "I think you savvy. Ese he tell me you savvy, he tell me you no mind, tell me you love me too much. Taboo belong me," she said, touching herself on the bosom as she had done upon our wedding-night. "Now I go 'way, taboo he go 'way too. Then you get too much copra. You like more better, I think. *Tofá, alii,*" says she in the native—"Farewell, chief!"

"Hold on!" I cried. "Don't be in such a hurry."

She looked at me sidelong with a smile. "You see, you get copra," she said, the same as you might offer candies to a child.

"Uma," said I, "hear reason. I didn't know, and that's a fact; and Case seems to have played it pretty mean upon the pair of us. But I do know now, and I don't mind; I love you too much. You no go 'way, you no leave me, I too much sorry."

"You no love me," she cried, "you talk me bad words!" And she threw herself in a corner of the floor and began to cry.

Well, I'm no scholar, but I wasn't born yesterday, and I thought the worst of that trouble was over. However, there she lay—her back turned, her face to the wall—and shook with sobbing like a little child, so that her feet jumped with it. It's strange how it hits a man when he's in love; for there's no use mincing things—Kanaka and all, I was in love with her, or just as good. I tried to take her hand, but she would none of that. "Uma," I said, "there's no sense in carrying on like this. I want you stop here, I want my little wifie, I tell you true."

"No tell me true," she sobbed.

"All right," says I, "I'll wait till you're through with this." And I sat right down beside her on the floor, and set to smooth her hair with my hand. At first she wriggled away when I touched her; then she seemed to notice me no more; then her sobs grew gradually less, and presently stopped; and the next thing I knew, she raised her face to mine.

"You tell me true? You like me stop?" she asked.

"Uma," I said, "I would rather have you than all the copra in the South Seas," which was a very big expression, and the strangest thing was that I meant it.

She threw her arms about me, sprang close up, and pressed her face to mine, in the island way of kissing, so that I was all wetted with her tears, and my heart went out to her wholly. I never

had anything so near me as this little brown bit of a girl. Many things went together, and all helped to turn my head. She was pretty enough to eat; it seemed she was my only friend in that queer place; I was ashamed that I had spoken rough to her: and she was a woman, and my wife, and a kind of a baby besides that I was sorry for; and the salt of her tears was in my mouth. And I forgot Case and the natives; and I forgot that I knew nothing of the story, or only remembered it to banish the remembrance; and I forgot that I was to get no copra, and so could make no livelihood; and I forgot my employers, and the strange kind of service I was doing them, when I preferred my fancy to their business; and I forgot even that Uma was no true wife of mine, but just a maid beguiled, and that in a pretty shabby style. But that is to look too far on. I will come to that part of it next.

It was late before we thought of getting dinner. The stove was out, and gone stone cold; but we fired up after a while, and cooked each a dish, helping and hindering each other, and making a play of it like children. I was so greedy of her nearness that I sat down to dinner with my lass upon my knee, made sure of her with one hand, and ate with the other. Ay, and more than that. She was the worst cook, I suppose, God made; the things she set her hand to it would have sickened an honest horse to eat of; yet I made my meal that day on Uma's cookery,

and can never call to mind to have been better pleased.

I didn't pretend to myself, and I didn't pretend to her. I saw I was clean gone; and if she was to make a fool of me, she must. And I suppose it was this that set her talking, for now she made sure that we were friends. A lot she told me, sitting in my lap and eating my dish, as I ate hers from foolery—a lot about herself and her mother and Case, all which would be very tedious, and fill sheets if I set it down in Beach de Mar, but which I must give a hint of in plain English, and one thing about myself, which had a very big effect on my concerns, as you are soon to hear.

It seems she was born in one of the Line Islands; had been only two or three years in these parts, where she had come with a white man, who was married to her mother and then died; and only the one year in Falesá. Before that they had been a good deal on the move, trekking about after the white man, who was one of those rolling stones that keep going round after a soft job. They talk about looking for gold at the end of a rainbow; but if a man wants an employment that'll last him till he dies, let him start out on the soft-job hunt. There's meat and drink in it too, and beer and skittles, for you never hear of them starving, and rarely see them sober; and as for steady sport, cock-fighting isn't in the same county with it. Anyway, this beach-

comber carried the woman and her daughter all over the shop, but mostly to out-of-the-way islands, where there were no police, and he thought, perhaps, the soft job hung out. I've my own view of this old party; but I was just as glad he had kept Uma clear of Apia and Papeete and these flash towns. At last he struck Fale-alii on this island, got some trade—the Lord knows how!—muddled it all away in the usual style, and died worth next to nothing, bar a bit of land at Falesá that he had got for a bad debt, which was what put it in the minds of the mother and daughter to come there and live. It seems Case encouraged them all he could, and helped to get their house built. He was very kind those days, and gave Uma trade, and there is no doubt he had his eye on her from the beginning. However, they had scarce settled, when up turned a young man, a native, and wanted to marry her. He was a small chief, and had some fine mats and old songs in his family, and was "very pretty," Uma said; and, altogether, it was an extraordinary match for a penniless girl and an outislander.

At the first word of this I got downright sick with jealousy.

"And you mean to say you would have married him?" I cried.

"*Ioe*, yes," said she. "I like too much!"

"Well!" I said. "And suppose I had come round after?"

"I like you more better now," said she. "But suppose I marry Ioane, I one good wife. I no common Kanaka. Good girl!" says she.

Well, I had to be pleased with that; but I promise you I didn't care about the business one little bit. And I liked the end of that yarn no better than the beginning. For it seems this proposal of marriage was the start of all the trouble. It seems, before that, Uma and her mother had been looked down upon, of course, for kinless folk and out-islanders, but nothing to hurt; and, even when Ioane came forward, there was less trouble at first than might have been looked for. And then, all of a sudden, about six months before my coming, Ioane backed out and left that part of the island, and from that day to this Uma and her mother had found themselves alone. None called at their house—none spoke to them on the roads. If they went to church, the other women drew their mats away and left them in a clear place by themselves. It was a regular excommunication, like what you read of in the Middle Ages; and the cause or sense of it beyond guessing. It was some *talo pepelo*, Uma said, some lie, some calumny; and all she knew of it was that the girls who had been jealous of her luck with Ioane used to twit her with his desertion, and cry out, when they met her alone in the woods, that she would never be married. "They tell me no man he marry me. He too much 'fraid," she said.

The only soul that came about them after this desertion was Master Case. Even he was chary of showing himself, and turned up mostly by night; and pretty soon he began to table his cards and make up to Uma. I was still sore about Ioane, and when Case turned up in the same line of business I cut up downright rough.

"Well," I said, sneering, "and I suppose you thought Case 'very pretty' and 'liked too much'?"

"Now you talk silly," said she. "White man, he come here, I marry him all-e-same Kanaka; very well then, he marry me all-e-same white woman. Suppose he no marry, he go 'way, woman he stop. All-e-same thief, empty hand, Tonga-heart—no can love! Now you come marry me. You big heart—you no 'shamed island-girl. That thing I love you far too much. I proud."

I don't know that ever I felt sicker all the days of my life. I laid down my fork, and I put away the "island-girl"; I didn't seem somehow to have any use for either, and I went and walked up and down in the house, and Uma followed me with her eyes, for she was troubled, and small wonder! But troubled was no word for it with me. I so wanted, and so feared, to make a clean breast of the sweep that I had been.

And just then there came a sound of singing out of the sea; it sprang up suddenly clear and near, as the boat turned the headland, and Uma,

running to the window, cried out it was "Misi" come upon his rounds.

I thought it was a strange thing I should be glad to have a missionary; but if it was strange, it was still true.

"Uma," said I, "you stop here in this room, and don't budge a foot out of it till I come back."

CHAPTER III

THE MISSIONARY

AS I came out on the verandah, the mission-boat was shooting for the mouth of the river. She was a long whale-boat painted white; a bit of an awning astern; a native pastor crouched on the wedge of poop, steering; some four-and-twenty paddles flashing and dipping, true to the boat-song; and the missionary under the awning, in his white clothes, reading in a book; and set him up! It was pretty to see and hear; there's no smarter sight in the islands than a missionary boat with a good crew and a good pipe to them; and I considered it for half a minute with a bit of envy perhaps, and then strolled down towards the river.

From the opposite side there was another man aiming for the same place, but he ran and got there first. It was Case; doubtless his idea was to keep me apart from the missionary, who might serve me as interpreter; but my mind was upon other things. I was thinking how he had jockeyed us about the marriage, and tried his hand on

Uma before; and at the sight of him rage flew into my nostrils.

"Get out of that, you low, swindling thief!" I cried.

"What's that you say?" says he.

I gave him the word again, and rammed it down with a good oath. "And if ever I catch you within six fathoms of my house," I cried, "I'll clap a bullet in your measly carcass."

"You must do as you like about your house," said he, "where I told you I have no thought of going; but this is a public place."

"It's a place where I have private business," said I. "I have no idea of a hound like you eavesdropping, and I give you notice to clear out."

"I don't take it, though," says Case.

"I'll show you then," said I.

"We'll have to see about that," said he.

He was quick with his hands, but he had neither the height nor the weight, being a flimsy creature alongside a man like me, and, besides, I was blazing to that height of wrath that I could have bit into a chisel. I gave him first the one and then the other, so that I could hear his head rattle and crack, and he went down straight.

"Have you had enough?" cried I. But he only looked up white and blank, and the blood spread upon his face like wine upon a napkin. "Have you had enough?" I cried again. "Speak

up, and don't lie malingering there, or I'll take my feet to you."

He sat up at that, and held his head—by the look of him you could see it was spinning—and the blood poured on his pyjamas.

"I've had enough for this time," says he, and he got up staggering, and went off by the way that he had come.

The boat was close in; I saw the missionary had laid his book to one side, and I smiled to myself. "He'll know I'm a man, anyway," thinks I.

This was the first time, in all my years in the Pacific, I had ever exchanged two words with any missionary, let alone asked one for a favour. I didn't like the lot, no trader does; they look down upon us, and make no concealment; and, besides, they're partly Kanakaised, and suck up with natives instead of with other white men like themselves. I had on a rig of clean, striped pyjamas—for, of course, I had dressed decent to go before the chiefs; but when I saw the missionary step out of this boat in the regular uniform, white duck clothes, pith helmet, white shirt and tie, and yellow boots to his feet, I could have bunged stones at him. As he came nearer, queering me pretty curious (because of the fight, I suppose), I saw he looked mortal sick, for the truth was he had a fever on, and had just had a chill in the boat.

"Mr. Tarleton, I believe?" says I, for I had got his name.

"And you, I suppose, are the new trader?" says he.

"I want to tell you first that I don't hold with missions," I went on, "and that I think you and the likes of you do a sight of harm, filling up the natives with old wives' tales and bumptiousness."

"You are perfectly entitled to your opinions," says he, looking a bit ugly, "but I have no call to hear them."

"It so happens that you've got to hear them," I said. "I'm no missionary, nor missionary lover; I'm no Kanaka, nor favourer of Kanakas —I'm just a trader; I'm just a common low God-damned white man and British subject, the sort you would like to wipe your boots on. I hope that's plain!"

"Yes, my man," said he. "It's more plain than creditable. When you are sober, you'll be sorry for this."

He tried to pass on, but I stopped him with my hand. The Kanakas were beginning to growl. Guess they didn't like my tone, for I spoke to that man as free as I would to you.

"Now, you can't say I've deceived you," said I, "and I can go on. I want a service—I want two services, in fact; and, if you care to give me them, I'll perhaps take more stock in what you call your Christianity."

He was silent for a moment. Then he smiled. "You are rather a strange sort of man," says he.

"I'm the sort of man God made me," says I. "I don't set up to be a gentleman," I said.

"I am not quite so sure," said he. "And what can I do for you, Mr. ——?"

"Wiltshire," I says, "though I'm mostly called Welsher; but Wiltshire is the way it's spelt, if the people on the beach could only get their tongues about it. And what do I want? Well, I'll tell you the first thing. I'm what you call a sinner—what I call a sweep—and I want you to help me make it up to a person I've deceived."

He turned and spoke to his crew in the native. "And now I am at your service," said he, "but only for the time my crew are dining. I must be much farther down the coast before night. I was delayed at Papa-Malulu till this morning, and I have an engagement in Fale-alii to-morrow night."

I led the way to my house in silence, and rather pleased with myself for the way I had managed the talk, for I like a man to keep his self-respect.

"I was sorry to see you fighting," says he.

"Oh, that's part of the yarn I want to tell you," I said. "That's service number two. After you've heard it you'll let me know whether you're sorry or not."

We walked right in through the store, and I was surprised to find Uma had cleared away the dinner things. This was so unlike her ways

that I saw she had done it out of gratitude, and liked her the better. She and Mr. Tarleton called each other by name, and he was very civil to her seemingly. But I thought little of that; they can always find civility for a Kanaka, it's us white men they lord it over. Besides, I didn't want much Tarleton just then. I was going to do my pitch.

"Uma," said I, "give us your marriage certificate." She looked put out. "Come," said I, "you can trust me. Hand it up."

She had it about her person, as usual; I believe she thought it was a pass to heaven, and if she died without having it handy she would go to hell. I couldn't see where she put it the first time, I couldn't see now where she took it from; it seemed to jump into her hand like that Blavatsky business in the papers. But it's the same way with all island women, and I guess they're taught it when young.

"Now," said I, with the certificate in my hand, "I was married to this girl by Black Jack, the negro. The certificate was wrote by Case, and it's a dandy piece of literature, I promise you. Since then I've found that there's a kind of cry in the place against this wife of mine, and so long as I keep her I cannot trade. Now, what would any man do in my place, if he was a man?" I said. "The first thing he would do is this, I guess." And I took and tore up the certificate and bunged the pieces on the floor.

"*Aué!*"[1] cried Uma, and began to clap her hands; but I caught one of them in mine.

"And the second thing that he would do," said I, "if he was what I would call a man and you would call a man, Mr. Tarleton, is to bring the girl right before you or any other missionary, and to up and say: 'I was wrong married to this wife of mine, but I think a heap of her, and now I want to be married to her right.' Fire away, Mr. Tarleton. And I guess you'd better do it in native; it'll please the old lady," I said, giving her the proper name of a man's wife upon the spot.

So we had in two of the crew for to witness, and were spliced in our own house; and the parson prayed a good bit, I must say—but not so long as some—and shook hands with the pair of us.

"Mr. Wiltshire," he says, when he had made out the lines and packed off the witnesses, "I have to thank you for a very lively pleasure. I have rarely performed the marriage ceremony with more grateful emotions."

That was what you would call talking. He was going on, besides, with more of it, and I was ready for as much taffy as he had in stock, for I felt good. But Uma had been taken up with something half through the marriage, and cut straight in.

"How your hand he get hurt?" she asked.

[1] Alas!

"You ask Case's head, old lady," says I.

She jumped with joy, and sang out.

"You haven't made much of a Christian of this one," says I to Mr. Tarleton.

"We didn't think her one of our worst," says he, "when she was at Fale-alii; and if Uma bears malice I shall be tempted to fancy she has good cause."

"Well, there we are at service number two," said I. "I want to tell you our yarn, and see if you can let a little daylight in."

"Is it long?" he asked.

"Yes," I cried; "it's a goodish bit of a yarn!"

"Well, I'll give you all the time I can spare," says he, looking at his watch. "But I must tell you fairly, I haven't eaten since five this morning, and, unless you can let me have something, I am not likely to eat again before seven or eight to-night."

"By God, we'll give you dinner!" I cried.

I was a little caught up at my swearing, just when all was going straight; and so was the missionary, I suppose, but he made believe to look out of the window, and thanked us.

So we ran him up a bit of a meal. I was bound to let the old lady have a hand in it, to show off, so I deputised her to brew the tea. I don't think I ever met such tea as she turned out. But that was not the worst, for she got round with the salt-box, which she considered an extra European touch, and turned my stew

into sea-water. Altogether, Mr. Tarleton had a devil of a dinner of it; but he had plenty entertainment by the way, for all the while that we were cooking, and afterwards, when he was making believe to eat, I kept posting him up on Master Case and the beach of Falesá, and he putting questions that showed he was following close.

"Well," said he at last, "I am afraid you have a dangerous enemy. This man Case is very clever, and seems really wicked. I must tell you I have had my eye on him for nearly a year, and have rather had the worst of our encounters. About the time when the last representative of your firm ran so suddenly away, I had a letter from Namu, the native pastor, begging me to come to Falesá at my earliest convenience, as his flock were all 'adopting Catholic practices.' I had great confidence in Namu; I fear it only shows how easily we are deceived. No one could hear him preach and not be persuaded he was a man of extraordinary parts. All our islanders easily acquire a kind of eloquence, and can roll out and illustrate, with a great deal of vigour and fancy, second-hand sermons; but Namu's sermons are his own, and I cannot deny that I have found them means of grace. Moreover, he has a keen curiosity in secular things, does not fear work, is clever at carpentering, and has made himself so much respected among the neighbouring pastors that we call him, in a

jest which is half serious, the Bishop of the East. In short, I was proud of the man; all the more puzzled by his letter, and took an occasion to come this way. The morning before my arrival, Vigours had been sent on board the *Lion*, and Namu was perfectly at his ease, apparently ashamed of his letter, and quite unwilling to explain it. This, of course, I could not allow, and he ended by confessing that he had been much concerned to find his people using the sign of the cross, but since he had learned the explanation his mind was satisfied. For Vigours had the Evil Eye, a common thing in a country of Europe called Italy, where men were often struck dead by that kind of devil, and it appeared the sign of the cross was a charm against its power.

"'And I explain it, Misi,' said Namu, 'in this way: the country in Europe is a Popey country, and the devil of the Evil Eye may be a Catholic devil, or, at least, used to Catholic ways. So then I reasoned thus: if this sign of the cross were used in a Popey manner it would be sinful, but when it is used only to protect men from a devil, which is a thing harmless in itself, the sign too must be harmless. For the sign is neither good nor bad. But if the bottle be full of gin, the gin is bad; and if the sign made in idolatry be bad, so is the idolatry.' And, very like a native pastor, he had a text apposite about the casting out of devils.

"'And who has been telling you about the Evil Eye?' I asked.

"He admitted it was Case. Now, I am afraid you will think me very narrow, Mr. Wiltshire, but I must tell you I was displeased, and cannot think a trader at all a good man to advise or have an influence upon my pastors. And, besides, there had been some flying talk in the country of old Adams and his being poisoned, to which I had paid no great heed; but it came back to me at the moment.

"'And is this Case a man of a sanctified life?' I asked.

"He admitted he was not; for, though he did not drink, he was profligate with women, and had no religion.

"'Then,' said I, 'I think the less you have to do with him the better.'

"But it is not easy to have the last word with a man like Namu. He was ready in a moment with an illustration. 'Misi,' said he, 'you have told me there were wise men, not pastors, not even holy, who knew many things useful to be taught—about trees, for instance, and beasts, and to print books, and about the stones that are burned to make knives of. Such men teach you in your college, and you learn from them, but take care not to learn to be unholy. Misi, Case is my college.'

"I knew not what to say. Mr. Vigours had evidently been driven out of Falesá by the mach-

inations of Case and with something not very unlike the collusion of my pastor. I called to mind it was Namu who had reassured me about Adams and traced the rumour to the ill-will of the priest. And I saw I must inform myself more thoroughly from an impartial source. There is an old rascal of a chief here, Faiaso, whom I daresay you saw to-day at the council; he has been all his life turbulent and sly, a great fomenter of rebellions, and a thorn in the side of the mission and the island. For all that he is very shrewd, and, except in politics or about his own misdemeanours, a teller of the truth. I went to his house, told him what I had heard, and besought him to be frank. I do not think I had ever a more painful interview. Perhaps you will understand me, Mr. Wiltshire, if I tell you that I am perfectly serious in these old wives' tales with which you reproached me, and as anxious to do well for these islands as you can be to please and to protect your pretty wife. And you are to remember that I thought Namu a paragon, and was proud of the man as one of the first ripe fruits of the mission. And now I was informed that he had fallen in a sort of dependence upon Case. The beginning of it was not corrupt; it began, doubtless, in fear and respect, produced by trickery and pretence; but I was shocked to find that another element had been lately added, that Namu helped himself in the store, and was believed to be deep in

Case's debt. Whatever the trader said, that Namu believed with trembling. He was not alone in this; many in the village lived in a similar subjection; but Namu's case was the most influential, it was through Namu that Case had wrought most evil; and with a certain following among the chiefs, and the pastor in his pocket, the man was as good as master of the village. You know something of Vigours and Adams, but perhaps you have never heard of old Underhill, Adams's predecessor. He was a quiet, mild old fellow, I remember, and we were told he had died suddenly: white men die very suddenly in Falesá. The truth, as I now heard it, made my blood run cold. It seems he was struck with a general palsy, all of him dead but one eye, which he continually winked. Word was started that the helpless old man was now a devil, and this vile fellow Case worked upon the natives' fears, which he professed to share, and pretended he durst not go into the house alone. At last a grave was dug, and the living body buried at the far end of the village. Namu, my pastor, whom I had helped to educate, offered up a prayer at the hateful scene.

"I felt myself in a very difficult position. Perhaps it was my duty to have denounced Namu and had him deposed. Perhaps I think so now, but at the time it seemed less clear. He had a great influence, it might prove greater than mine. The natives are prone to superstí-

tion; perhaps by stirring them up I might but ingrain and spread these dangerous fancies. And Namu besides, apart from this novel and accursed influence, was a good pastor, an able man, and spiritually minded. Where should I look for a better? How was I to find as good? At that moment, with Namu's failure fresh in my view, the work of my life appeared a mockery; hope was dead in me. I would rather repair such tools as I had than go abroad in quest of others that must certainly prove worse; and a scandal is, at the best, a thing to be avoided when humanly possible. Right or wrong, then, I determined on a quiet course. All that night I denounced and reasoned with the erring pastor, twitted him with his ignorance and want of faith, twitted him with his wretched attitude, making clean the outside of the cup and platter, callously helping at a murder, childishly flying in excitement about a few childish, unnecessary, and inconvenient gestures; and long before day I had him on his knees and bathed in the tears of what seemed a genuine repentance. On Sunday I took the pulpit in the morning, and preached from First Kings, nineteenth, on the fire, the earthquake, and the voice, distinguishing the true spiritual power, and referring with such plainness as I dared to recent events in Falesá. The effect produced was great, and it was much increased when Namu rose in his turn and confessed that he had been wanting in faith and

conduct, and was convinced of sin. So far, then, all was well; but there was one unfortunate circumstance. It was nearing the time of our 'May' in the island, when the native contributions to the missions are received; it fell in my duty to make a notification on the subject, and this gave my enemy his chance, by which he was not slow to profit.

"News of the whole proceedings must have been carried to Case as soon as church was over, and the same afternoon he made an occasion to meet me in the midst of the village. He came up with so much intentness and animosity that I felt it would be damaging to avoid him.

"'So,' says he, in native, 'here is the holy man. He has been preaching against me, but that was not in his heart. He has been preaching upon the love of God; but that was not in his heart, it was between his teeth. Will you know what was in his heart?' cries he. 'I will show it to you!' And, making a snatch at my head, he made believe to pluck out a dollar, and held it in the air.

"There went that rumour through the crowd with which Polynesians receive a prodigy. As for myself, I stood amazed. The thing was a common conjuring trick which I have seen performed at home a score of times; but how was I to convince the villagers of that? I wished I had learned legerdemain instead of Hebrew, that I might have paid the fellow out with his own

coin. But there I was; I could not stand there silent, and the best I could find to say was weak.

"'I will trouble you not to lay hands on me again,' said I.

"'I have no such thought,' said he, 'nor will I deprive you of your dollar. Here it is,' he said, and flung it at my feet. I am told it lay where it fell three days."

"I must say it was well played," said I.

"Oh! he is clever," said Mr. Tarleton, "and you can now see for yourself how dangerous. He was a party to the horrid death of the paralytic; he is accused of poisoning Adams; he drove Vigours out of the place by lies that might have led to murder; and there is no question but he has now made up his mind to rid himself of you. How he means to try we have no guess; only be sure, it's something new. There is no end to his readiness and invention."

"He gives himself a sight of trouble," says I. "And after all, what for?"

"Why, how many tons of copra may they make in this district?" asked the missionary.

"I daresay as much as sixty tons," says I.

"And what is the profit to the local trader?" he asked.

"You may call it three pounds," said I.

"Then you can reckon for yourself how much he does it for," said Mr. Tarleton. "But the more important thing is to defeat him. It is clear he spread some report against Uma, in

order to isolate and have his wicked will of her. Failing of that, and seeing a new rival come upon the scene, he used her in a different way. Now, the first point to find out is about Namu.—Uma, when people began to leave you and your mother alone, what did Namu do?"

"Stop away all-e-same," says Uma.

"I fear the dog has returned to his vomit," said Mr. Tarleton. "And now what am I to do for you? I will speak to Namu, I will warn him he is observed; it will be strange if he allow anything to go on amiss when he is put upon his guard. At the same time, this precaution may fail, and then you must turn elsewhere. You have two people at hand to whom you might apply. There is, first of all, the priest, who might protect you by the Catholic interest; they are a wretchedly small body, but they count two chiefs. And then there is old Faiaso. Ah! if it had been some years ago you would have needed no one else; but his influence is much reduced, it has gone into Maea's hands, and Maea, I fear, is one of Case's jackals. In fine, if the worst comes to the worst, you must send up or come yourself to Fale-alii, and, though I am not due at this end of the island for a month, I will just see what can be done."

So Mr. Tarleton said farewell; and half an hour later the crew were singing and the paddles flashing in the missionary boat.

CHAPTER IV

DEVIL-WORK

NEAR a month went by without much doing. The same night of our marriage Galoshes called round, and made himself mighty civil, and got into a habit of dropping in about dark and smoking his pipe with the family. He could talk to Uma, of course, and started to teach me native and French at the same time. He was a kind old buffer, though the dirtiest you would wish to see, and he muddled me up with foreign languages worse than the Tower of Babel.

That was one employment we had, and it made me feel less lonesome; but there was no profit in the thing, for though the priest came and sat and yarned, none of his folks could be enticed into my store, and if it hadn't been for the other occupation I struck out, there wouldn't have been a pound of copra in the house. This was the idea: Fa'avao (Uma's mother) had a score of bearing-trees. Of course we could get no labour, being all as good as tabooed, and the two women and I turned to and made copra with our own hands. It was copra to make your

mouth water when it was done—I never understood how much the natives cheated me till I had made that four hundred pounds of my own hand—and it weighed so light I felt inclined to take and water it myself.

When we were at the job a good many Kanakas used to put in the best of the day looking on, and once that nigger turned up. He stood back with the natives and laughed and did the big don and the funny dog, till I began to get riled.

"Here, you nigger!" says I.

"I don't address myself to you, Sah," says the nigger. "Only speak to gen'le'um."

"I know," says I, "but it happens I was addressing myself to you, Mr. Black Jack. And all I want to know is just this: did you see Case's figure-head about a week ago?"

"No, Sah," says he.

"That's all right, then," says I; "for I'll show you the own brother to it, only black, in the inside of about two minutes."

And I began to walk towards him, quite slow, and my hands down; only there was trouble in my eye, if anybody took the pains to look.

"You're a low, obstropulous fellow, Sah," says he.

"You bet!" says I.

By that time he thought I was about as near as convenient, and lit out so it would have done your heart good to see him travel. And that

was all I saw of that precious gang until what I am about to tell you.

It was one of my chief employments these days to go pot-hunting in the woods, which I found (as Case had told me) very rich in game. I have spoken of the cape which shut up the village and my station from the east. A path went about the end of it, and led into the next bay. A strong wind blew here daily, and as the line of the barrier reef stopped at the end of the cape, a heavy surf ran on the shores of the bay. A little cliffy hill cut the valley in two parts, and stood close on the beach; and at high water the sea broke right on the face of it, so that all passage was stopped. Woody mountains hemmed the place all round; the barrier to the east was particularly steep and leafy, the lower parts of it, along the sea, falling in sheer black cliffs streaked with cinnabar; the upper part lumpy with the tops of the great trees. Some of the trees were bright green, and some red, and the sand of the beach as black as your shoes. Many birds hovered round the bay, some of them snow-white; and the flying-fox (or vampire) flew there in broad daylight, gnashing its teeth.

For a long while I came as far as this shooting, and went no farther. There was no sign of any path beyond, and the cocoa-palms in the front of the foot of the valley were the last this way. For the whole "eye" of the island, as natives call the windward end, lay desert. From Falesá

round about to Papa-Malulu, there was neither house, nor man, nor planted fruit-tree; and the reef being mostly absent, and the shores bluff, the sea beat direct among crags, and there was scarce a landing-place.

I should tell you that after I began to go in the woods, although no one appeared to come near my store, I found people willing enough to pass the time of day with me where nobody could see them; and as I had begun to pick up native, and most of them had a word or two of English, I began to hold little odds and ends of conversation, not to much purpose, to be sure, but they took off the worst of the feeling, for it's a miserable thing to be made a leper of.

It chanced one day towards the end of the month, that I was sitting in this bay in the edge of the bush, looking east, with a Kanaka. I had given him a fill of tobacco, and we were making out to talk as best we could; indeed, he had more English than most.

I asked him if there was no road going eastward.

"One time one road," said he. "Now he dead."

"Nobody he go there?" I asked.

"No good," said he. "Too much devil he stop there."

"Oho!" says I, "got-um plenty devil, that bush?"

"Man devil, woman devil; too much devil,"

said my friend. "Stop there all-e-time. Man he go there, no come back."

I thought if this fellow was so well posted on devils and spoke of them so free, which is not common, I had better fish for a little information about myself and Uma.

"You think me one devil?" I asked.

"No think devil," said he, soothingly. "Think all-e-same fool."

"Uma, she devil?" I asked again.

"No, no; no devil. Devil stop bush," said the young man.

I was looking in front of me across the bay, and I saw the hanging front of the woods pushed suddenly open, and Case, with a gun in his hand, step forth into the sunshine on the black beach. He was got up in light pyjamas, near white, his gun sparkled, he looked mighty conspicuous; and the land-crabs scuttled from all around him to their holes.

"Hullo, my friend!" says I, "you no talk all-e-same true. Ese he go, he come back."

"Ese no all-e-same; Ese *Tiapolo*," says my friend; and, with a "Good-by," slunk off among the trees.

I watched Case all around the beach, where the tide was low; and let him pass me on the homeward way to Falesá. He was in deep thought, and the birds seemed to know it, trotting quite near him on the sand, or wheeling and calling in his ears. When he passed me I

could see by the working of his lips that he was talking to himself, and what pleased me mightily, he had still my trade-mark on his brow. I tell you the plain truth: I had a mind to give him a gunful in his ugly mug, but I thought better of it.

All this time, and all the time I was following home, I kept repeating that native word, which I remembered by "Polly, put the kettle on and make us all some tea," tea-a-pollo.

"Uma," says I, when I got back, "what does *Tiapolo* mean?"

"Devil," says she.

"I thought *aitu* was the word for that," I said.

"*Aitu* 'nother kind of devil," said she; "stop bush, eat Kanaka. Tiapolo big chief devil, stop home; all-e-same Christian devil."

"Well, then," said I, "I'm no farther forward. How can Case be Tiapolo?"

"No all-e-same," said she. "Ese belong Tiapolo. Tiapolo too much like; Ese all-e-same his son. Suppose Ese he wish something, Tiapolo he make him."

"That's mighty convenient for Ese," says I. "And what kind of things does he make for him?"

Well, out came a rigmarole of all sorts of stories, many of which (like the dollar he took from Mr. Tarleton's head) were plain enough to me, but others I could make nothing of; and the thing that most surprised the Kanakas was what

surprised me least—namely, that he would go in the desert among all the *aitus*. Some of the boldest, however, had accompanied him, and had heard him speak with the dead and give them orders, and, safe in his protection, had returned unscathed. Some said he had a church there, where he worshipped Tiapolo, and Tiapolo appeared to him; others swore that there was no sorcery at all, that he performed his miracles by the power of prayer, and the church was no church, but a prison, in which he had confined a dangerous *aitu*. Namu had been in the bush with him once, and returned glorifying God for these wonders. Altogether, I began to have a glimmer of the man's position, and the means by which he had acquired it, and, though I saw he was a tough nut to crack, I was noways cast down.

"Very well," said I, "I'll have a look at Master Case's place of worship myself, and we'll see about the glorifying."

At this Uma fell in a terrible taking; if I went in the high bush I should never return; none could go there but by the protection of Tiapolo.

"I'll chance it on God's," said I. "I'm a good sort of a fellow, Uma, as fellows go, and I guess God'll con me through."

She was silent for a while. "I think," said she, mighty solemn—and then, presently—"Victoreea, he big chief?"

"You bet!" said I.

"He like you too much?" she asked again. I told her, with a grin, I believed the old lady was rather partial to me.

"All right," said she. "Victoreea he big chief, like you too much. No can help you here in Falesá; no can do—too far off. Maea he be small chief—stop here. Suppose he like you—make you all right. All-e-same God and Tiapolo. God he big chief—got too much work. Tiapolo he small chief—he like too much make-see, work very hard."

"I'll have to hand you over to Mr. Tarleton," said I. "Your theology's out of its bearings, Uma."

However, we stuck to this business all the evening, and, with the stories she told me of the desert and its dangers, she came near frightening herself into a fit. I don't remember half a quarter of them, of course, for I paid little heed; but two come back to me kind of clear.

About six miles up the coast there is a sheltered cove they call *Fanga-anaana*—"the haven full of caves." I've seen it from the sea myself, as near as I could get my boys to venture in; and it's a little strip of yellow sand, black cliffs overhang it, full of the black mouths of caves; great trees overhang the cliffs, and dangle-down lianas; and in one place, about the middle, a big brook pours over in a cascade. Well, there was a boat going by here, with six young men of Falesá, "all very pretty," Uma said, which was the loss of

them. It blew strong, there was a heavy head sea, and by the time they opened Fanga-anaana, and saw the white cascade and the shady beach, they were all tired and thirsty, and their water had run out. One proposed to land and get a drink, and, being reckless fellows, they were all of the same mind except the youngest. Lotu was his name; he was a very good young gentleman, and very wise; and he held out that they were crazy, telling them the place was given over to spirits and devils and the dead, and there were no living folk nearer than six miles the one way, and maybe twelve the other. But they laughed at his words, and, being five to one, pulled in, beached the boat, and landed. It was a wonderful pleasant place, Lotu said, and the water excellent. They walked round the beach, but could see nowhere any way to mount the cliffs, which made them easier in their mind; and at last they sat down to make a meal on the food they had brought with them. They were scarce set, when there came out of the mouth of one of the black caves six of the most beautiful ladies ever seen; they had flowers in their hair, and the most beautiful breasts, and necklaces of scarlet seeds; and began to jest with these young gentlemen, and the young gentlemen to jest back with them, all but Lotu. As for Lotu, he saw there would be no living woman in such a place, and ran, and flung himself in the bottom of the boat, and covered his face, and prayed. All the

time the business lasted Lotu made one clean break of prayer, and that was all he knew of it, until his friends came back, and made him sit up, and they put to sea again out of the bay, which was now quite desert, and no word of the six ladies. But, what frightened Lotu most, not one of the five remembered anything of what had passed, but they were all like drunken men, and sang and laughed in the boat, and skylarked. The wind freshened and came squally, and the sea rose extraordinary high; it was such weather as any man in the islands would have turned his back to and fled home to Falesá; but these five were like crazy folk, and cracked on all sail and drove their boat into the seas. Lotu went to the bailing; none of the others thought to help him, but sang and skylarked and carried on, and spoke singular things beyond a man's comprehension, and laughed out loud when they said them. So the rest of the day Lotu bailed for his life in the bottom of the boat, and was all drenched with sweat and cold sea-water; and none heeded him. Against all expectation, they came safe in a dreadful tempest to Papa-Malulu, where the palms were singing out, and the cocoanuts flying like cannon-balls about the village green; and the same night the five young gentlemen sickened, and spoke never a reasonable word until they died.

"And do you mean to tell me you can swallow a yarn like that?" I asked.

She told me the thing was well known, and with handsome young men alone it was even common; but this was the only case where five had been slain the same day and in a company by the love of the women-devils; and it had made a great stir in the island, and she would be crazy if she doubted.

"Well, anyway," says I, "you needn't be frightened about me. I've no use for the women-devils. You're all the women I want, and all the devil too, old lady."

To this she answered there were other sorts, and she had seen one with her own eyes. She had gone one day alone to the next bay, and, perhaps, got too near the margin of the bad place. The boughs of the high bush overshadowed her from the cant of the hill, but she herself was outside on a flat place, very stony and growing full of young mummy-apples four and five feet high. It was a dark day in the rainy season, and now there came squalls that tore off the leaves and sent them flying, and now it was all still as in a house. It was in one of these still times that a whole gang of birds and flying-foxes came pegging out of the bush like creatures frightened. Presently after she heard a rustle nearer hand, and saw, coming out of the margin of the trees, among the mummy-apples, the appearance of a lean grey old boar. It seemed to think as it came, like a person; and all of a sudden, as she looked at it coming, she

was aware it was no boar, but a thing that was a man with a man's thoughts. At that she ran, and the pig after her, and as the pig ran it holla'd aloud, so that the place rang with it.

"I wish I had been there with my gun," said I. "I guess that pig would have holla'd so as to surprise himself."

But she told me a gun was of no use with the like of these, which were the spirits of the dead.

Well, this kind of talk put in the evening, which was the best of it; but of course it didn't change my notion, and the next day, with my gun and a good knife, I set off upon a voyage of discovery. I made, as near as I could, for the place where I had seen Case come out; for if it was true he had some kind of establishment in the bush I reckoned I should find a path. The beginning of the desert was marked off by a wall, to call it so, for it was more of a long mound of stones. They say it reaches right across the island, but how they know it is another question, for I doubt if any one has made the journey in a hundred years, the natives sticking chiefly to the sea and their little colonies along the coast, and that part being mortal high and steep and full of cliffs. Up to the west side of the wall the ground has been cleared, and there are cocoa-palms and mummy-apples and guavas, and lots of sensitive. Just across, the bush begins outright; high bush at that, trees going up like the masts of ships, and ropes of liana hanging down like a ship's

rigging, and nasty orchids growing in the forks like funguses. The ground where there was no underwood looked to be a heap of boulders. I saw many green pigeons which I might have shot, only I was there with a different idea. A number of butterflies flopped up and down along the ground like dead leaves; sometimes I would hear a bird calling, sometimes the wind overhead, and always the sea along the coast.

But the queerness of the place it's more difficult to tell of, unless to one who has been alone in the high bush himself. The brightest kind of a day it is always dim down there. A man can see to the end of nothing; whichever way he looks the wood shuts up, one bough folding with another like the fingers of your hand; and whenever he listens he hears always something new—men talking, children laughing, the strokes of an axe a far way ahead of him, and sometimes a sort of a quick, stealthy scurry near at hand that makes him jump and look to his weapons. It's all very well for him to tell himself that he's alone, bar trees and birds; he can't make out to believe it; whichever way he turns the whole place seems to be alive and looking on. Don't think it was Uma's yarns that put me out; I don't value native talk a fourpenny-piece; it's a thing that's natural in the bush, and that's the end of it.

As I got near the top of the hill, for the ground of the wood goes up in this place steep as a lad-

der, the wind began to sound straight on, and the leaves to toss and switch open and let in the sun. This suited me better; it was the same noise all the time, and nothing to startle. Well, I had got to a place where there was an underwood of what they call wild cocoa-nut—mighty pretty with its scarlet fruit—when there came a sound of singing in the wind that I thought I had never heard the like of. It was all very fine to tell myself it was the branches; I knew better. It was all very fine to tell myself it was a bird; I knew never a bird that sang like that. It rose and swelled, and died away and swelled again; and now I thought it was like some one weeping, only prettier; and now I thought it was like harps; and there was one thing I made sure of, it was a sight too sweet to be wholesome in a place like that. You may laugh if you like; but I declare I called to mind the six young ladies that came, with their scarlet necklaces, out of the cave at Fanga-anaana, and wondered if they sang like that. We laugh at the natives and their superstitions; but see how many traders take them up, splendidly educated white men, that have been book-keepers (some of them) and clerks in the old country. It's my belief a superstition grows up in a place like the different kind of weeds; and as I stood there and listened to that wailing I twittered in my shoes.

You may call me a coward to be frightened; I thought myself brave enough to go on ahead.

But I went mighty carefully, with my gun cocked, spying all about me like a hunter, fully expecting to see a handsome young woman sitting somewhere in the bush, and fully determined (if I did) to try her with a charge of duck-shot. And sure enough, I had not gone far when I met with a queer thing. The wind came on the top of the wood in a strong puff, the leaves in front of me burst open, and I saw for a second something hanging in a tree. It was gone in a wink, the puff blowing by and the leaves closing. I tell you the truth: I had made up my mind to see an *aitu;* and if the thing had looked like a pig or a woman, it wouldn't have given me the same turn. The trouble was that it seemed kind of square, and the idea of a square thing that was alive and sang knocked me sick and silly. I must have stood quite a while; and I made pretty certain it was right out of the same tree that the singing came. Then I began to come to myself a bit.

"Well," says I, "if this is really so, if this is a place where there are square things that sing, I'm gone up anyway. Let's have my fun for my money."

But I thought I might as well take the off-chance of a prayer being any good; so I plumped on my knees and prayed out loud; and all the time I was praying the strange sounds came out of the tree, and went up and down, and changed, for all the world like music, only you could see

it wasn't human—there was nothing there that you could whistle.

As soon as I had made an end in proper style, I laid down my gun, stuck my knife between my teeth, walked right up to that tree and began to climb. I tell you my heart was like ice. But presently, as I went up, I caught another glimpse of the thing, and that relieved me, for I thought it seemed like a box; and when I had got right up to it I near fell out of the tree with laughing.

A box it was, sure enough, and a candle-box at that, with the brand upon the side of it; and it had banjo-strings stretched so as to sound when the wind blew. I believe they call the thing a Tyrolean[1] harp, whatever that may mean.

"Well, Mr. Case," said I, "you frightened me once, but I defy you to frighten me again," I says, and slipped down the tree, and set out again to find my enemy's head office, which I guessed would not be far away.

The undergrowth was thick in this part; I couldn't see before my nose, and must burst my way through by main force and ply the knife as I went, slicing the cords of the lianas and slashing down whole trees at a blow. I call them trees for the bigness, but in truth they were just big weeds, and sappy to cut through like carrot. From all this crowd and kind of vegetation, I was just thinking to myself, the place might have

[1] Æolian.

once been cleared, when I came on my nose over a pile of stones, and saw in a moment it was some kind of a work of man. The Lord knows when it was made or when deserted, for this part of the island has lain undisturbed since long before the whites came. A few steps beyond I hit into the path I had been always looking for. It was narrow, but well beaten, and I saw that Case had plenty of disciples. It seems, indeed it was, a piece of fashionable boldness to venture up here with the trader, and a young man scarce reckoned himself grown till he had got his breech tattooed, for one thing, and seen Case's devils for another. This is mighty like Kanakas: but, if you look at it another way, it's mighty like white folks too.

A bit along the path I was brought to a clear stand, and had to rub my eyes. There was a wall in front of me, the path passing it by a gap; it was tumbledown and plainly very old, but built of big stones very well laid; and there is no native alive to-day upon that island that could dream of such a piece of building! Along all the top of it was a line of queer figures, idols or scarecrows, or what not. They had carved and painted faces ugly to view, their eyes and teeth were of shell, their hair and their bright clothes blew in the wind, and some of them worked with the tugging. There are islands up west where they make these kind of figures till to-day; but if ever they were made in this island, the prac-

tice and the very recollection of it are now long forgotten. And the singular thing was that all these bogies were as fresh as toys out of a shop.

Then it came in my mind that Case had let out to me the first day that he was a good forger of island curiosities—a thing by which so many traders turn an honest penny. And with that I saw the whole business, and how this display served the man a double purpose: first of all, to season his curiosities, and then to frighten those that came to visit him.

But I should tell you (what made the thing more curious) that all the time the Tyrolean harps were harping round me in the trees, and even while I looked, a green-and-yellow bird (that, I suppose, was building) began to tear the hair off the head of one of the figures.

A little farther on I found the best curiosity of the museum. The first I saw of it was a longish mound of earth with a twist to it. Digging off the earth with my hands, I found underneath tarpaulin stretched on boards, so that this was plainly the roof of a cellar. It stood right on the top of the hill, and the entrance was on the far side, between two rocks, like the entrance to a cave. I went as far in as the bend, and, looking round the corner, saw a shining face. It was big and ugly, like a pantomime mask, and the brightness of it waxed and dwindled, and at times it smoked.

"Oho!" says I, "luminous paint!"

And I must say I rather admired the man's ingenuity. With a box of tools and a few mighty simple contrivances he had made out to have a devil of a temple. Any poor Kanaka brought up here in the dark, with the harps whining all round him, and shown that smoking face in the bottom of a hole, would make no kind of doubt but he had seen and heard enough devils for a lifetime. It's easy to find out what Kanakas think. Just go back to yourself anyway round from ten to fifteen years old, and there's an average Kanaka. There are some pious, just as there are pious boys; and the most of them, like the boys again, are middling honest and yet think it rather larks to steal, and are easy scared, and rather like to be so. I remember a boy I was at school with at home who played the Case business. He didn't know anything, that boy; he couldn't do anything; he had no luminous paint and no Tyrolean harps; he just boldly said he was a sorcerer, and frightened us out of our boots, and we loved it. And then it came in my mind how the master had once flogged that boy, and the surprise we were all in to see the sorcerer catch it and hum like anybody else. Thinks I to myself: "I must find some way of fixing it so for Master Case." And the next moment I had my idea.

I went back by the path, which, when once you had found it, was quite plain and easy walking; and when I stepped out on the black

sands, who should I see but Master Case himself! I cocked my gun and held it handy, and we marched up and passed without a word, each keeping the tail of his eye on the other; and no sooner had we passed than we each wheeled round like fellows drilling, and stood face to face. We had each taken the same notion in his head, you see, that the other fellow might give him the load of his gun in the stern.

"You've shot nothing," says Case.

"I'm not on the shoot to-day," said I.

"Well, the devil go with you for me," says he.

"The same to you," says I.

But we stuck just the way we were; no fear of either of us moving.

Case laughed. "We can't stop here all day, though," said he.

"Don't let me detain you," says I.

He laughed again. "Look here, Wiltshire, do you think me a fool?" he asked.

"More of a knave, if you want to know," says I.

"Well, do you think it would better me to shoot you here, on this open beach?" said he. "Because I don't. Folks come fishing every day. There may be a score of them up the valley now, making copra; there might be half a dozen on the hill behind you, after pigeons; they might be watching us this minute, and I shouldn't wonder. I give you my word I don't want to shoot you. Why should I? You don't

hinder me any. You haven't got one pound of copra but what you made with your own hands, like a negro slave. You're vegetating—that's what I call it—and I don't care where you vegetate, nor yet how long. Give me your word you don't mean to shoot me, and I'll give you a lead and walk away."

"Well," said I, "you're frank and pleasant, ain't you? And I'll be the same. I don't mean to shoot you to-day. Why should I? This business is beginning; it ain't done yet, Mr. Case. I've given you one turn already. I can see the marks of my knuckles on your head to this blooming hour, and I've more cooking for you. I'm not a paralee, like Underhill. My name ain't Adams, and it ain't Vigours; and I mean to show you that you've met your match."

"This is a silly way to talk," said he. "This is not the talk to make me move on with."

"All right," said I, "stay where you are. I ain't in any hurry, and you know it. I can put in a day on this beach and never mind. I ain't got any copra to bother with. I ain't got any luminous paint to see to."

I was sorry I said that last, but it whipped out before I knew. I could see it took the wind out of his sails, and he stood and stared at me with his brow drawn up. Then I suppose he made up his mind he must get to the bottom of this.

"I take you at your word," says he, and turned his back, and walked right into the devil's bush.

I let him go, of course, for I had passed my word. But I watched him as long as he was in sight, and after he was gone lit out for cover as lively as you would want to see, and went the rest of the way home under the bush, for I didn't trust him sixpence worth. One thing I saw, I had been ass enough to give him warning, and that which I meant to do I must do at once.

You would think I had had about enough excitement for one morning, but there was another turn waiting me. As soon as I got far enough round the Cape to see my house I made out there were strangers there; a little farther, and no doubt about it. There was a couple of armed sentinels squatting at my door. I could only suppose the trouble about Uma must have come to a head, and the station been seized. For aught I could think, Uma was taken up already, and these armed men were waiting to do the like with me.

However, as I came nearer, which I did at top speed, I saw there was a third native sitting on the verandah like a guest, and Uma was talking with him like a hostess. Nearer still I made out it was the big young chief, Maea, and that he was smiling away and smoking. And what was he smoking? None of your European cigarettes fit for a cat, not even the genuine big, knock-me-down native article that a fellow can really put in the time with if his pipe is broke—but a cigar, and one of my Mexicans at that, that I could

swear to. At sight of this my heart started beating, and I took a wild hope in my head that the trouble was over, and Maea had come round.

Uma pointed me out to him as I came up, and he met me at the head of my own stairs like a thorough gentleman.

"Vilivili," said he, which was the best they could make of my name, "I pleased."

There is no doubt when an island chief wants to be civil he can do it. I saw the way things were from the word go. There was no call for Uma to say to me: "He no 'fraid Ese now, come bring copra." I tell you I shook hands with that Kanaka like as if he was the best white man in Europe.

The fact was, Case and he had got after the same girl, or Maea suspected it, and concluded to make hay of the trader on the chance. He had dressed himself up, got a couple of his retainers cleaned and armed to kind of make the thing more public, and, just waiting till Case was clear of the village, came round to put the whole of his business my way. He was rich as well as powerful. I suppose that man was worth fifty thousand nuts per annum. I gave him the price of the beach and a quarter cent better, and as for credit, I would have advanced him the inside of the store and the fittings besides, I was so pleased to see him. I must say he bought like a gentleman: rice and tins and biscuits enough for a

week's feast, and stuffs by the bolt. He was agreeable besides; he had plenty fun to him; and we cracked jests together, mostly through the interpreter, because he had mighty little English, and my native was still off colour. One thing I made out: he could never really have thought much harm of Uma; he could never have been really frightened, and must just have made believe from dodginess, and because he thought Case had a strong pull in the village and could help him on.

This set me thinking that both he and I were in a tightish place. What he had done was to fly in the face of the whole village, and the thing might cost him his authority. More than that, after my talk with Case on the beach, I thought it might very well cost me my life. Case had as good as said he would pot me if ever I got any copra; he would come home to find the best business in the village had changed hands, and the best thing I thought I could do was to get in first with the potting.

"See here, Uma," says I, "tell him I'm sorry I made him wait, but I was up looking at Case's Tiapolo store in the bush."

"He want savvy if you no 'fraid?" translated Uma.

I laughed out. "Not much!" says I. "Tell him the place is a blooming toy-shop! Tell him in England we give these things to the kid to play with."

"He want savvy if you hear devil sing?" she asked next.

"Look here," I said, "I can't do it now, because I've got no banjo-strings in stock; but the next time the ship comes round I'll have one of these same contraptions right here in my verandah, and he can see for himself how much devil there is to it. Tell him, as soon as I can get the strings I'll make one for his pickaninnies. The name of the concern is a Tyrolean harp; and you can tell him the name means in English that nobody but dam-fools give a cent for it."

This time he was so pleased he had to try his English again. "You talk true?" says he.

"Rather!" said I. "Talk all-e-same Bible. Bring out a Bible here, Uma, if you've got such a thing, and I'll kiss it. Or, I'll tell you what's better still," says I, taking a header, "ask him if he's afraid to go up there himself by day."

It appeared he wasn't; he could venture as far as that by day and in company.

"That's the ticket, then!" said I. "Tell him the man's a fraud and the place foolishness, and if he'll go up there to-morrow he'll see all that's left of it. But tell him this, Uma, and mind he understands it. If he gets talking it's bound to come to Case, and I'm a dead man! I'm playing his game, tell him, and if he says one word my blood will be at his door and be the damnation of him here and after."

She told him, and he shook hands with me up

to the hilt, and, says he: "No talk. Go up to-mollow. You my friend?"

"No, sir," says I, "no such foolishness. I've come here to trade, tell him, and not to make friends. But, as to Case, I'll send that man to glory!"

So off Maea went, pretty well pleased, as I could see.

CHAPTER V

NIGHT IN THE BUSH

WELL, I was committed now; Tiapolo had to be smashed up before next day, and my hands were pretty full, not only with preparations, but with argument. My house was like a mechanics' debating society. Uma was so made up that I shouldn't go into the bush by night, or that, if I did, I was never to come back again. You know her style of arguing: you've had a specimen about Queen Victoria and the devil; and I leave you to fancy if I was tired of it before dark.

At last I had a good idea. "What was the use of casting my pearls before her?" I thought; some of her own chopped hay would be likelier to do the business.

"I'll tell you what, then," said I. "You fish out your Bible, and I'll take that up along with me. That'll make me right."

She swore a Bible was no use.

"That's just your Kanaka ignorance," said I. "Bring the Bible out."

She brought it, and I turned to the title-page,

where I thought there would likely be some English, and so there was. "There!" said I. "Look at that! '*London: Printed for the British and Foreign Bible Society, Blackfriars*," and the date, which I can't read, owing to its being in these X's. There's no devil in hell can look near the Bible Society, Blackfriars. Why, you silly," I said, "how do you suppose we get along with our own *aitus* at home! All Bible Society!"

"I think you no got any," said she. "White man, he tell me you no got."

"Sounds likely, don't it?" I asked. "Why would these islands all be chock full of them and none in Europe?"

"Well, you no got bread-fruit," said she.

I could have torn my hair. "Now, look here, old lady," said I, "you dry up, for I'm tired of you. I'll take the Bible, which'll put me as straight as the mail, and that's the last word I've got to say."

The night fell extraordinary dark, clouds coming up with sundown and overspreading all; not a star showed; there was only an end of a moon, and that not due before the small hours. Round the village, what with the lights and the fires in the open houses, and the torches of many fishers moving on the reef, it kept as gay as an illumination; but the sea and the mountains and woods were all clean gone. I suppose it might be eight o'clock when I took the road, laden like a donkey. First there was that Bible, a book as big

as your head, which I had let myself in for by my own tomfoolery. Then there was my gun, and knife, and lantern, and patent matches, all necessary. And then there was the real plant of the affair in hand, a mortal weight of gunpowder, a pair of dynamite fishing-bombs, and two or three pieces of slowmatch that I had hauled out of the tin cases and spliced together the best way I could; for the match was only trade stuff, and a man would be crazy that trusted it. Altogether, you see, I had the materials of a pretty good blow up! Expense was nothing to me; I wanted that thing done right.

As long as I was in the open, and had the lamp in my house to steer by, I did well. But when I got to the path, it fell so dark I could make no headway, walking into trees and swearing there, like a man looking for the matches in his bedroom. I knew it was risky to light up, for my lantern would be visible all the way to the point of the cape, and as no one went there after dark, it would be talked about, and come to Case's ears. But what was I to do? I had either to give the business over and lose caste with Maea, or light up, take my chance, and get through the thing the smartest I was able.

As long as I was on the path I walked hard, but when I came to the black beach I had to run. For the tide was now nearly flowed; and to get through with my powder dry between the surf and the steep hill, took all the quickness I pos-

sessed. As it was, even the wash caught me to the knees, and I came near falling on a stone. All this time the hurry I was in, and the free air and smell of the sea, kept my spirits lively; but when I was once in the bush and began to climb the path I took it easier. The fearsomeness of the wood had been a good bit rubbed off for me by Master Case's banjo-strings and graven images, yet I thought it was a dreary walk, and guessed, when the disciples went up there, they must be badly scared. The light of the lantern, striking among all these trunks and forked branches and twisted rope-ends of lianas, made the whole place, or all that you could see of it, a kind of a puzzle of turning shadows. They came to meet you, solid and quick like giants, and then spun off and vanished; they hove up over your head like clubs, and flew away into the night like birds. The floor of the bush glimmered with dead wood, the way the match-box used to shine after you had struck a lucifer. Big, cold drops fell on me from the branches overhead like sweat. There was no wind to mention; only a little icy breath of a land breeze that stirred nothing; and the harps were silent.

The first landfall I made was when I got through the bush of wild cocoanuts, and came in view of the bogies on the wall. Mighty queer they looked by the shining of the lantern, with their painted faces and shell eyes, and their clothes, and their hair hanging. One after an-

other I pulled them all up and piled them in a bundle on the cellar roof, so as they might go to glory with the rest. Then I chose a place behind one of the big stones at the entrance, buried my powder and the two shells, and arranged my match along the passage. And then I had a look at the smoking head, just for good-by. It was doing fine.

"Cheer up," says I. "You're booked."

It was my first idea to light up and be getting homeward; for the darkness and the glimmer of the dead wood and the shadows of the lantern made me lonely. But I knew where one of the harps hung; it seemed a pity it shouldn't go with the rest; and at the same time I couldn't help letting on to myself that I was mortal tired of my employment, and would like best to be at home and have the door shut. I stepped out of the cellar and argued it fore and back. There was a sound of the sea far down below me on the coast; nearer hand not a leaf stirred; I might have been the only living creature this side of Cape Horn. Well, as I stood there thinking, it seemed the bush woke and became full of little noises. Little noises they were, and nothing to hurt; a bit of a crackle, a bit of a rush; but the breath jumped right out of me and my throat went as dry as a biscuit. It wasn't Case I was afraid of, which would have been common-sense; I never thought of Case; what took me, as sharp as the colic, was the old wives' tales—the devil-women

and the man-pigs. It was the toss of a penny whether I should run; but I got a purchase on myself, and stepped out, and held up the lantern (like a fool) and looked all around.

In the direction of the village and the path there was nothing to be seen; but when I turned inland it's a wonder to me I didn't drop. There, coming right up out of the desert and the bad bush—there, sure enough, was a devil-woman, just as the way I had figured she would look. I saw the light shine on her bare arms and her bright eyes, and there went out of me a yell so big that I thought it was my death.

"Ah! No sing out!" says the devil-woman, in a kind of a high whisper. "Why you talk big voice? Put out light! Ese he come."

"My God Almighty, Uma, is that you?" says I.

"*Ioe*,"[1] says she. "I come quick. Ese here soon."

"You come alone?" I asked. "You no 'fraid?"

"Ah, too much 'fraid!" she whispered, clutching me. "I think die."

"Well," says I, with a kind of a weak grin, "I'm not the one to laugh at you, Mrs. Wiltshire, for I'm about the worst scared man in the South Pacific myself."

She told me in two words what brought her. I was scarce gone, it seems, when Fa'avao came

[1] Yes.

in, and the old woman had met Black Jack running as hard as he was fit from our house to Case's. Uma neither spoke nor stopped, but lit right out to come and warn me. She was so close at my heels that the lantern was her guide across the beach, and afterward, by the glimmer of it in the trees, she got her line up hill. It was only when I had got to the top or was in the cellar that she wandered—Lord knows where!—and lost a sight of precious time, afraid to call out lest Case was at the heels of her, and falling in the bush, so that she was all knocked and bruised. That must have been when she got too far to the southward, and how she came to take me in the flank at last and frighten me beyond what I've got the words to tell of.

Well, anything was better than a devil-woman, but I thought her yarn serious enough. Black Jack had no call to be about my house, unless he was set there to watch; and it looked to me as if my tomfool word about the paint, and perhaps some chatter of Maea's, had got us all in a clove hitch. One thing was clear: Uma and I were here for the night; we daren't try to go home before day, and even then it would be safer to strike round up the mountain and come in by the back of the village, or we might walk into an ambuscade. It was plain, too, that the mine should be sprung immediately, or Case might be in time to stop it.

I marched into the tunnel, Uma keeping tight

hold of me, opened my lantern and lit the match. The first length of it burned like a spill of paper, and I stood stupid, watching it burn, and thinking we were going aloft with Tiapolo, which was none of my views. The second took to a better rate, though faster than I cared about; and at that I got my wits again, hauled Uma clear of the passage, blew out and dropped the lantern, and the pair of us groped our way into the bush until I thought it might be safe, and lay down together by a tree.

"Old lady," I said, "I won't forget this night. You're a trump, and that's what's wrong with you."

She bumped herself close up to me. She had run out the way she was, with nothing on her but her kilt; and she was all wet with the dews and the sea on the black beach, and shook straight on with cold and the terror of the dark and the devils.

"Too much 'fraid," was all she said.

The far side of Case's hill goes down near as steep as a precipice into the next valley. We were on the very edge of it, and I could see the dead wood shine and hear the sea sound far below. I didn't care about the position, which left me no retreat, but I was afraid to change. Then I saw I had made a worse mistake about the lantern, which I should have left lighted, so that I could have had a crack at Case when he stepped into the shine of it. And since I hadn't

had the wit to do that, it seemed a senseless thing to leave the good lantern to blow up with the graven images. The thing belonged to me, after all, and was worth money, and might come in handy. If I could have trusted the match, I might have run in still and rescued it. But who was going to trust to the match? You know what trade is. The stuff was good enough for Kanakas to go fishing with, where they've got to look lively anyway, and the most they risk is only to have their hand blown off. But for any one that wanted to fool around a blow-up like mine that match was rubbish.

Altogether the best I could do was to lie still, see my shot-gun handy, and wait for the explosion. But it was a solemn kind of a business. The blackness of the night was like solid; the only thing you could see was the nasty bogy glimmer of the dead wood, and that showed you nothing but itself; and as for sounds, I stretched my ears till I thought I could have heard the match burn in the tunnel, and that bush was as silent as a coffin. Now and then there was a bit of a crack; but whether it was near or far, whether it was Case stubbing his toes within a few yards of me, or a tree breaking miles away, I knew no more than the babe unborn.

And then all of a sudden, Vesuvius went off. It was a long time coming; but when it came (though I say it that shouldn't) no man could ask to see a better. At first it was just a son of a

gun of a row, and a spout of fire, and the wood lighted up so that you could see to read. And then the trouble began. Uma and I were half buried under a wagonful of earth, and glad it was no worse, for one of the rocks at the entrance of the tunnel was fired clean into the air, fell within a couple of fathoms of where we lay, and bounded over the edge of the hill, and went pounding down into the next valley. I saw I had rather under-calculated our distance, or overdone the dynamite and powder, which you please.

And presently I saw I had made another slip. The noise of the thing began to die off, shaking the island; the dazzle was over; and yet the night didn't come back the way I expected. For the whole wood was scattered with red coals and brands from the explosion; they were all round me on the flat, some had fallen below in the valley, and some stuck and flared in the tree-tops. I had no fear of fire, for these forests are too wet to kindle. But the trouble was that the place was all lit up—not very bright, but good enough to get a shot by; and the way the coals were scattered, it was just as likely Case might have the advantage as myself. I looked all round for his white face, you may be sure; but there was not a sign of him. As for Uma, the life seemed to have been knocked right out of her by the bang and blaze of it.

There was one bad point in my game. One of the blessed graven images had come down all

afire, hair and clothes and body, not four yards away from me. I cast a mighty noticing glance all round; there was still no Case, and I made up my mind I must get rid of that burning stick before he came, or I should be shot there like a dog.

It was my first idea to have crawled, and then I thought speed was the main thing, and stood half up to make a rush. The same moment, from somewhere between me and the sea, there came a flash and a report, and a rifle-bullet screeched in my ear. I swung straight round and up with my gun, but the brute had a Winchester, and before I could as much as see him his second shot knocked me over like a ninepin. I seemed to fly in the air, then came down by the run and lay half a minute, silly; and then I found my hands empty and my gun had flown over my head as I fell. It makes a man mighty wide awake to be in the kind of box that I was in. I scarcely knew where I was hurt, or whether I was hurt or not, but turned right over on my face to crawl after my weapon. Unless you have tried to get about with a smashed leg you don't know what pain is, and I let out a howl like a bullock's.

This was the unluckiest noise that ever I made in my life. Up to then Uma had stuck to her tree like a sensible woman, knowing she would be only in the way; but as soon as she heard me sing out she ran forward. The Winchester cracked again, and down she went.

I had sat up, leg and all, to stop her; but when I saw her tumble I clapped down again where I was, lay still, and felt the handle of my knife. I had been scurried and put out before. No more of that for me. He had knocked over my girl, I had got to fix him for it; and I lay there and gritted my teeth, and footed up the chances. My leg was broke, my gun was gone. Case had still ten shots in his Winchester. It looked a kind of hopeless business. But I never despaired nor thought upon despairing: that man had got to go.

For a goodish bit not one of us let on. Then I heard Case begin to move nearer in the bush, but mighty careful. The image had burned out, there were only a few coals left here and there, and the wood was main dark, but had a kind of a low glow in it like a fire on its last legs. It was by this that I made out Case's head looking at me over a big tuft of ferns, and at the same time the brute saw me and shouldered his Winchester. I lay quite still, and as good as looked into the barrel: it was my last chance, but I thought my heart would have come right out of its bearings. Then he fired. Lucky for me it was no shotgun, for the bullet struck within an inch of me and knocked the dirt in my eyes.

Just you try and see if you can lie quiet, and let a man take a sitting shot at you and miss you by a hair. But I did, and lucky, too. A while Case stood with the Winchester at the port-

arms; then he gave a little laugh to himself and stepped round the ferns.

"Laugh!" thought I. "If you had the wit of a louse you would be praying!"

I was all as taut as a ship's hawser or the spring of a watch, and as soon as he came within reach of me I had him by the ankle, plucked the feet right out from under him, laid him out, and was upon the top of him, broken leg and all, before he breathed. His Winchester had gone the same road as my shot-gun; it was nothing to me—I defied him now. I'm a pretty strong man anyway, but I never knew what strength was till I got hold of Case. He was knocked out of time by the rattle he came down with, and threw up his hands together, more like a frightened woman, so that I caught both of them with my left. This wakened him up, and he fastened his teeth in my forearm like a weasel. Much I cared. My leg gave me all the pain I had any use for, and I drew my knife and got it in the place.

"Now," said I, "I've got you; and you're gone up, and a good job too! Do you feel the point of that? That's for Underhill! And there's for Adams! And now here's for Uma, and that's going to knock your blooming soul right out of you!"

With that I gave him the cold steel for all I was worth. His body kicked under me like a spring sofa; he gave a dreadful kind of a long moan, and lay still.

"I wonder if you're dead? I hope so!" I thought, for my head was swimming. But I wasn't going to take chances; I had his own example too close before me for that; and I tried to draw the knife out to give it him again. The blood came over my hands, I remember, hot as tea; and with that I fainted clean away, and fell with my head on the man's mouth.

When I came to myself it was pitch dark; the cinders had burned out; there was nothing to be seen but the shine of the dead wood, and I couldn't remember where I was nor why I was in such pain, nor what I was all wetted with. Then it came back, and the first thing I attended to was to give him the knife again a half a dozen times up to the handle. I believe he was dead already, but it did him no harm and did me good.

"I bet you're dead now," I said, and then I called to Uma.

Nothing answered, and I made a move to go and grope for her, fouled my broken leg, and fainted again.

When I came to myself the second time the clouds had all cleared away, except a few that sailed there, white as cotton. The moon was up —a tropic moon. The moon at home turns a wood black, but even this old butt-end of a one showed up that forest as green as by day. The night birds—or, rather, they're a kind of early morning bird—sang out with their long, falling notes like nightingales. And I could see the

dead man, that I was still half resting on, looking right up into the sky with his open eyes, no paler than when he was alive; and a little way off Uma tumbled on her side. I got over to her the best way I was able, and when I got there she was broad awake and crying, and sobbing to herself with no more noise than an insect. It appears she was afraid to cry out loud, because of the *aitus*. Altogether she was not much hurt, but scared beyond belief; she had come to her senses a long while ago, cried out to me, heard nothing in reply, made out we were both dead, and had lain there ever since, afraid to budge a finger. The ball had ploughed up her shoulder, and she had lost a main quantity of blood; but I soon had that tied up the way it ought to be with the tail of my shirt and a scarf I had on, got her head on my sound knee and my back against a trunk, and settled down to wait for morning. Uma was for neither use nor ornament, and could only clutch hold of me and shake and cry. I don't suppose there was ever anybody worse scared, and, to do her justice, she had had a lively night of it. As for me, I was in a good bit of pain and fever, but not so bad when I sat still; and every time I looked over to Case I could have sung and whistled. Talk about meat and drink! To see that man lying there dead as a herring filled me full.

The night birds stopped after a while; and then the light began to change, the east came orange,

the whole wood began to whirr with singing like a musical box, and there was the broad day.

I didn't expect Maea for a long while yet; and, indeed, I thought there was an off-chance he might go back on the whole idea and not come at all. I was the better pleased when, about an hour after daylight, I heard sticks smashing and a lot of Kanakas laughing and singing out to keep their courage up. Uma sat up quite brisk at the first word of it; and presently we saw a party come stringing out of the path, Maea in front, and behind him a white man in a pith helmet. It was Mr. Tarleton, who had turned up late last night in Falesá having left his boat and walked the last stage with a lantern.

They buried Case upon the field of glory, right in the hole where he had kept the smoking head. I waited till the thing was done; and Mr. Tarleton prayed, which I thought tom-foolery, but I'm bound to say he gave a pretty sick view of the dear departed's prospects, and seemed to have his own ideas of hell. I had it out with him afterward, told him he had scamped his duty, and what he had ought to have done was to up like a man and tell the Kanakas plainly Case was damned, and a good riddance; but I never could get him to see it my way. Then they made me a litter of poles and carried me down to the station. Mr. Tarleton set my leg, and made a regular missionary splice of it, so that I limp to this day. That done, he took

down my evidence, and Uma's, and Maea's, wrote it all out fine, and had us sign it; and then he got the chiefs and marched over to Papa Randall's to seize Case's papers.

All they found was a bit of a diary, kept for a good many years, and all about the price of copra, and chickens being stolen, and that; and the books of the business and the will I told you of in the beginning, by both of which the whole thing (stock, lock, and barrel) appeared to belong to the Samoa woman. It was I that bought her out at a mighty reasonable figure, for she was in a hurry to get home. As for Randall and the black, they had to tramp; got into some kind of a station on the Papa-Malulu side; did very bad business, for the truth is neither of the pair was fit for it, and lived mostly on fish, which was the means of Randall's death. It seems there was a nice shoal in one day, and papa went after them with the dynamite; either the match burned too fast, or papa was full, or both, but the shell went off (in the usual way) before he threw it, and where was papa's hand? Well, there's nothing to hurt in that; the islands up north are all full of one-handed men like the parties in the *Arabian Nights;* but either Randall was too old, or he drank too much, and the short and the long of it was that he died. Pretty soon after the nigger was turned out of the island for stealing from white men, and went off to the west, where he found men of his own colour, in case he

liked that, and the men of his own colour took and ate him at some kind of a corroborree, and I'm sure I hope he was to their fancy!

So there was I, left alone in my glory at Falesá; and when the schooner came round I filled her up, and gave her a deck cargo half as high as the house. I must say Mr. Tarleton did the right thing by us; but he took a meanish kind of a revenge.

"Now, Mr. Wiltshire," said he, "I've put you all square with everybody here. It wasn't difficult to do, Case being gone; but I have done it, and given my pledge besides that you will deal fairly with the natives. I must ask you to keep my word."

Well, so I did. I used to be bothered about my balances, but I reasoned it out this way. We all have queerish balances, and the natives all know it and water their copra in a proportion so that it's fair all round; but the truth is, it did use to bother me, and, though I did well in Falesá, I was half glad when the firm moved me on to another station, where I was under no kind of a pledge and could look my balances in the face.

As for the old lady, you know her as well as I do. She's only the one fault. If you don't keep your eye lifting she would give away the roof off the station. Well, it seems it's natural in Kanakas. She's turned a powerful big woman now, and could throw a London bobby over her shoulder. But that's natural in Kanakas too, and

there's no manner of doubt that she's an A 1 wife.

Mr. Tarleton's gone home, his trick being over. He was the best missionary I ever struck, and now, it seems, he's parsonising down Somerset way. Well, that's best for him; he'll have no Kanakas there to get luny over.

My public-house? Not a bit of it, nor ever likely. I'm stuck here, I fancy. I don't like to leave the kids, you see: and—there's no use talking—they're better here than what they would be in a white man's country, though Ben took the eldest up to Auckland, where he's being schooled with the best. But what bothers me is the girls. They're only half-castes, of course; I know that as well as you do, and there's nobody thinks less of half-castes than I do; but they're mine, and about all I've got. I can't reconcile my mind to their taking up with Kanakas, and I'd like to know where I'm to find the whites?

THE BOTTLE IMP

Note.—Any student of that very unliterary product, the English drama of the early part of the century, will here recognise the name and the root idea of a piece once rendered popular by the redoubtable O. Smith. The root idea is there, and identical, and yet I believe I have made it a new thing. And the fact that the tale has been designed and written for a Polynesian audience may lend it some extraneous interest nearer home.
—R. L. S.

THE BOTTLE IMP

THERE was a man of the island of Hawaii, whom I shall call Keawe; for the truth is, he still lives, and his name must be kept secret; but the place of his birth was not far from Honaunau, where the bones of Keawe the Great lie hidden in a cave. This man was poor, brave, and active; he could read and write like a schoolmaster; he was a first-rate mariner besides, sailed for some time in the island steamers, and steered a whale-boat on the Hamakua coast. At length it came in Keawe's mind to have a sight of the great world and foreign cities, and he shipped on a vessel bound to San Francisco.

This is a fine town, with a fine harbour, and rich people uncountable; and, in particular. there is one hill which is covered with palaces, Upon this hill Keawe was one day taking a walk, with his pocket full of money, viewing the great houses upon either hand with pleasure. "What fine houses there are!" he was thinking, "and how happy must these people be who dwell in them, and take no care for the morrow!" The thought was in his mind when he came abreast

of a house that was smaller than some others, but all finished and beautified like a toy; the steps of that house shone like silver, and the borders of the garden bloomed like garlands, and the windows were bright like diamonds; and Keawe stopped and wondered at the excellence of all he saw. So stopping, he was aware of a man that looked forth upon him through a window, so clear that Keawe could see him as you see a fish in a pool upon the reef. The man was elderly, with a bald head and a black beard; and his face was heavy with sorrow, and he bitterly sighed. And the truth of it is, that as Keawe looked in upon the man, and the man looked out upon Keawe, each envied the other.

All of a sudden the man smiled and nodded, and beckoned Keawe to enter, and met him at the door of the house.

"This is a fine house of mine," said the man, and bitterly sighed. "Would you not care to view the chambers?"

So he led Keawe all over it, from the cellar to the roof, and there was nothing there that was not perfect of its kind, and Keawe was astonished.

"Truly," said Keawe, "this is a beautiful house; if I lived in the like of it, I should be laughing all day long. How comes it, then, that you should be sighing?"

"There is no reason," said the man, "why you should not have a house in all points similar to

this, and finer, if you wish. You have some money, I suppose?"

"I have fifty dollars," said Keawe; "but a house like this will cost more than fifty dollars."

The man made a computation. "I am sorry you have no more," said he, "for it may raise you trouble in the future; but it shall be yours at fifty dollars."

"The house?" asked Keawe.

"No, not the house," replied the man; "but the bottle. For, I must tell you, although I appear to you so rich and fortunate, all my fortune, and this house itself and its garden, came out of a bottle not much bigger than a pint. This is it."

And he opened a lock-fast place, and took out a round-bellied bottle with a long neck; the glass of it was white like milk, with changing rainbow colours in the grain. Withinsides something obscurely moved, like a shadow and a fire.

"This is the bottle," said the man; and, when Keawe laughed, "You do not believe me?" he added. "Try, then, for yourself. See if you can break it."

So Keawe took the bottle up and dashed it on the floor till he was weary; but it jumped on the floor like a child's ball, and was not injured.

"This is a strange thing," said Keawe. "For by the touch of it, as well as by the look, the bottle should be of glass."

"Of glass it is," replied the man, sighing more heavily than ever; "but the glass of it was tempered in the flames of hell. An imp lives in it, and that is the shadow we behold there moving; or, so I suppose. If any man buy this bottle the imp is at his command; all that he desires—love, fame, money, houses like this house, ay, or a city like this city—all are his at the word uttered. Napoleon had this bottle, and by it he grew to be the king of the world; but he sold it at the last and fell. Captain Cook had this bottle, and by it he found his way to so many islands; but he, too, sold it, and was slain upon Hawaii. For, once it is sold, the power goes and the protection; and unless a man remain content with what he has, ill will befall him."

"And yet you talk of selling it yourself?" Keawe said.

"I have all I wish, and I am growing elderly," replied the man. "There is one thing the imp cannot do—he cannot prolong life; and, it would not be fair to conceal from you there is a drawback to the bottle; for if a man die before he sells it, he must burn in hell for ever."

"To be sure, that is a drawback and no mistake," cried Keawe. "I would not meddle with the thing. I can do without a house, thank God; but there is one thing I could not be doing with one particle, and that is to be damned."

"Dear me, you must not run away with things," returned the man. "All you have to

do is to use the power of the imp in moderation, and then sell it to some one else, as I do to you, and finish your life in comfort."

"Well, I observe two things," said Keawe. "All the time you keep sighing like a maid in love, that is one; and, for the other, you sell this bottle very cheap."

"I have told you already why I sigh," said the man. "It is because I fear my health is breaking up; and, as you said yourself, to die and go to the devil is a pity for any one. As for why I sell so cheap, I must explain to you there is a peculiarity about the bottle. Long ago, when the devil brought it first upon earth, it was extremely expensive, and was sold first of all to Prester John for many millions of dollars; but it cannot be sold at all, unless sold at a loss. If you sell it for as much as you paid for it, back it comes to you again like a homing pigeon. It follows that the price has kept falling in these centuries, and the bottle is now remarkably cheap. I bought it myself from one of my great neighbours on this hill, and the price I paid was only ninety dollars. I could sell it for as high as eighty-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents, but not a penny dearer, or back the thing must come to me. Now, about this there are two bothers. First, when you offer a bottle so singular for eighty-odd dollars, people suppose you to be jesting. And second—but there is no hurry about that—and I need not go into it. Only

remember it must be coined money that you sell it for."

"How am I to know that this is all true?" asked Keawe.

"Some of it you can try at once," replied the man. "Give me your fifty dollars, take the bottle, and wish your fifty dollars back into your pocket. If that does not happen, I pledge you my honour I will cry off the bargain and restore your money."

"You are not deceiving me?" said Keawe.

The man bound himself with a great oath.

"Well, I will risk that much," said Keawe, "for that can do no harm," and he paid over his money to the man, and the man handed him the bottle.

"Imp of the bottle," said Keawe, "I want my fifty dollars back." And sure enough, he had scarce said the word before his pocket was as heavy as ever.

"To be sure this is a wonderful bottle," said Keawe.

"And now good-morning to you, my fine fellow, and the devil go with you for me," said the man.

"Hold on," said Keawe, "I don't want any more of this fun. Here, take your bottle back."

"You have bought it for less than I paid for it," replied the man, rubbing his hands. "It is yours now; and, for my part, I am only concerned to see the back of you." And with that he rang

for his Chinese servant, and had Keawe shown out of the house.

Now, when Keawe was in the street, with the bottle under his arm, he began to think. "If all is true about this bottle, I may have made a losing bargain," thinks he. "But, perhaps the man was only fooling me." The first thing he did was to count his money; the sum was exact —forty-nine dollars American money, and one Chili piece. "That looks like the truth," said Keawe. "Now I will try another part."

The streets in that part of the city were as clean as a ship's decks, and though it was noon, there were no passengers. Keawe set the bottle in the gutter and walked away. Twice he looked back, and there was the milky, round-bellied bottle where he left it. A third time he looked back, and turned a corner; but he had scarce done so, when something knocked upon his elbow, and behold! it was the long neck sticking up; and as for the round belly, it was jammed into the pocket of his pilot-coat.

"And that looks like the truth," said Keawe.

The next thing he did was to buy a corkscrew in a shop, and go apart into a secret place in the fields. And there he tried to draw the cork, but as often as he put the screw in, out it came again, and the cork as whole as ever.

"This is some new sort of cork," said Keawe, and all at once he began to shake and sweat, for he was afraid of that bottle.

On his way back to the port-side he saw a shop where a man sold shells and clubs from the wild islands, old heathen deities, old coined money, pictures from China and Japan, and all manner of things that sailors bring in their sea-chests. And here he had an idea. So he went in and offered the bottle for a hundred dollars. The man of the shop laughed at him at first, and offered him five; but, indeed, it was a curious bottle, such glass was never blown in any human glassworks, so prettily the colours shone under the milky white, and so strangely the shadow hovered in the midst; so, after he had disputed a while after the manner of his kind, the shopman gave Keawe sixty silver dollars for the thing and set it on a shelf in the midst of his window.

"Now," said Keawe, "I have sold that for sixty which I bought for fifty—or, to say truth, a little less, because one of my dollars was from Chili. Now I shall know the truth upon another point."

So he went back on board his ship, and when he opened his chest, there was the bottle, and had come more quickly than himself. Now Keawe had a mate on board whose name was Lopaka.

"What ails you?" said Lopaka, "that you stare in your chest?"

They were alone in the ship's forecastle, and Keawe bound him to secrecy, and told all.

"This is a very strange affair," said Lopaka; "and I fear you will be in trouble about this bottle. But there is one point very clear—that you are sure of the trouble, and you had better have the profit in the bargain. Make up your mind what you want with it; give the order, and if it is done as you desire, I will buy the bottle myself; for I have an idea of my own to get a schooner, and go trading through the islands."

"That is not my idea," said Keawe; "but to have a beautiful house and garden on the Kona Coast, where I was born, the sun shining in at the door, flowers in the garden, glass in the windows, pictures on the walls, and toys and fine carpets on the tables, for all the world like the house I was in this day—only a story higher, and with balconies all about like the King's palace; and to live there without care and make merry with my friends and relatives."

"Well," said Lopaka, "let us carry it back with us to Hawaii; and if all comes true, as you suppose, I will buy the bottle, as I said, and ask a schooner."

Upon that they were agreed, and it was not long before the ship returned to Honolulu, carrying Keawe and Lopaka, and the bottle. They were scarce come ashore when they met a friend upon the beach, who began at once to condole with Keawe.

"I do not know what I am to be condoled about," said Keawe.

"Is it possible you have not heard," said the friend, "your uncle—that good old man—is dead, and your cousin—that beautiful boy—was drowned at sea?"

Keawe was filled with sorrow, and, beginning to weep and to lament, he forgot about the bottle. But Lopaka was thinking to himself, and presently, when Keawe's grief was a little abated, "I have been thinking," said Lopaka, "had not your uncle lands in Hawaii, in the district of Kaü?"

"No," said Keawe, "not in Kaü: they are on the mountain-side—a little be south Hookena."

"These lands will now be yours?" asked Lopaka.

"And so they will," says Keawe, and began again to lament for his relatives.

"No," said Lopaka, "do not lament at present. I have a thought in my mind. How if this should be the doing of the bottle? For here is the place ready for your house."

"If this be so," cried Keawe, "it is a very ill way to serve me by killing my relatives. But it may be, indeed; for it was in just such a station that I saw the house with my mind's eye."

"The house, however, is not yet built," said Lopaka.

"No, nor like to be!" said Keawe; "for though my uncle has some coffee and ava and bananas, it will not be more than will keep me in comfort; and the rest of that land is the black lava."

"Let us go to the lawyer," said Lopaka; "I have still this idea in my mind."

Now, when they came to the lawyer's, it appeared Keawe's uncle had grown monstrous rich in the last days, and there was a fund of money.

"And here is the money for the house!" cried Lopaka.

"If you are thinking of a new house," said the lawyer, "here is the card of a new architect of whom they tell me great things."

"Better and better!" cried Lopaka. "Here is all made plain for us. Let us continue to obey orders."

So they went to the architect, and he had drawings of houses on his table.

"You want something out of the way," said the architect. "How do you like this?" and he handed a drawing to Keawe.

Now, when Keawe set eyes on the drawing, he cried out aloud, for it was the picture of his thought exactly drawn.

"I am in for this house," thought he. "Little as I like the way it comes to me, I am in for it now, and I may as well take the good along with the evil."

So he told the architect all that he wished, and how he would have that house furnished, and about the pictures on the wall and the knick-knacks on the tables; and he asked the man plainly for how much he would undertake the whole affair.

The architect put many questions, and took his pen and made a computation; and when he had done he named the very sum that Keawe had inherited.

Lopaka and Keawe looked at one another and nodded.

"It is quite clear," thought Keawe, "that I am to have this house, whether or no. It comes from the devil, and I fear I will get little good by that; and of one thing I am sure, I will make no more wishes as long as I have this bottle. But with the house I am saddled, and I may as well take the good along with the evil."

So he made his terms with the architect, and they signed a paper; and Keawe and Lopaka took ship again and sailed to Australia; for it was concluded between them they should not interfere at all, but leave the architect and the bottle imp to build and to adorn that house at their own pleasure.

The voyage was a good voyage, only all the time Keawe was holding in his breath, for he had sworn he would utter no more wishes, and take no more favours, from the devil. The time was up when they got back. The architect told them that the house was ready, and Keawe and Lopaka took a passage in the *Hall*, and went down Kona way to view the house, and see if all had been done fitly according to the thought that was in Keawe's mind.

Now, the house stood on the mountain-side,

visible to ships. Above, the forest ran up into the clouds of rain; below, the black lava fell in cliffs, where the kings of old lay buried. A garden bloomed about that house with every hue of flowers; and there was an orchard of papaia on the one hand and an orchard of bread-fruit on the other, and right in front, towards the sea, a ship's mast had been rigged up and bore a flag. As for the house, it was three stories high, with great chambers and broad balconies on each. The windows were of glass, so excellent that it was as clear as water and as bright as day. All manner of furniture adorned the chambers. Pictures hung upon the wall in golden frames—pictures of ships, and men fighting, and of the most beautiful women, and of singular places; nowhere in the world are there pictures of so bright a colour as those Keawe found hanging in his house. As for the knick-knacks, they were extraordinarily fine: chiming clocks and musical boxes, little men with nodding heads, books filled with pictures, weapons of price from all quarters of the world, and the most elegant puzzles to entertain the leisure of a solitary man. And as no one would care to live in such chambers, only to walk through and view them, the balconies were made so broad that a whole town might have lived upon them in delight; and Keawe knew not which to prefer, whether the back porch, where you get the land breeze and looked upon the orchards and the flowers, or the

front balcony, where you could drink the wind of the sea, and look down the steep wall of the mountain and see the *Hall* going by once a week or so between Hookena and the hills of Pele, or the schooners plying up the coast for wood and ava and bananas.

When they had viewed all, Keawe and Lopaka sat on the porch.

"Well," asked Lopaka, "is it all as you designed?"

"Words cannot utter it," said Keawe. "It is better than I dreamed, and I am sick with satisfaction."

"There is but one thing to consider," said Lopaka, "all this may be quite natural, and the bottle imp have nothing whatever to say to it. If I were to buy the bottle, and got no schooner after all, I should have put my hand in the fire for nothing. I gave you my word, I know; but yet I think you would not grudge me one more proof."

"I have sworn I would take no more favours," said Keawe. "I have gone already deep enough."

"This is no favour I am thinking of," replied Lopaka. "It is only to see the imp himself. There is nothing to be gained by that, and so nothing to be ashamed of, and yet, if I once saw him, I should be sure of the whole matter. So indulge me so far, and let me see the imp; and, after that, here is the money in my hand, and I will buy it."

"There is only one thing I am afraid of," said Keawe. "The imp may be very ugly to view, and if you once set eyes upon him you might be very undesirous of the bottle."

"I am a man of my word," said Lopaka. "And here is the money betwixt us."

"Very well," replied Keawe, "I have a curiosity myself. So come, let us have one look at you, Mr. Imp."

Now as soon as that was said, the imp looked out of the bottle, and in again, swift as a lizard; and there sat Keawe and Lopaka turned to stone. The night had quite come, before either found a thought to say or voice to say it with; and then Lopaka pushed the money over and took the bottle.

"I am a man of my word," said he, "and had need to be so, or I would not touch this bottle with my foot. Well, I shall get my schooner and a dollar or two for my pocket; and then I will be rid of this devil as fast as I can. For to tell you the plain truth, the look of him has cast me down."

"Lopaka," said Keawe, "do not you think any worse of me than you can help; I know it is night, and the roads bad, and the pass by the tombs an ill place to go by so late, but I declare since I have seen that little face, I cannot eat or sleep or pray till it is gone from me. I will give you a lantern, and a basket to put the bottle in, and any picture or fine thing in all my house

that takes your fancy; and be gone at once, and go sleep at Hookena with Nahinu."

"Keawe," said Lopaka, "many a man would take this ill; above all, when I am doing you a turn so friendly, as to keep my word and buy the bottle; and for that matter, the night and the dark, and the way by the tombs, must be all tenfold more dangerous to a man with such a sin upon his conscience and such a bottle under his arm. But for my part, I am so extremely terrified myself, I have not the heart to blame you. Here I go, then; and I pray God you may be happy in your house, and I fortunate with my schooner, and both get to heaven in the end in spite of the devil and his bottle."

So Lopaka went down the mountain; and Keawe stood in his front balcony, and listened to the clink of the horse's shoes, and watched the lantern go shining down the path, and along the cliff of caves where the old dead are buried; and all the time he trembled and clasped his hands, and prayed for his friend, and gave glory to God that he himself was escaped out of that trouble.

But the next day came very brightly, and that new house of his was so delightful to behold that he forgot his terrors. One day followed another, and Keawe dwelt there in perpetual joy. He had his place on the back porch; it was there he ate and lived, and read the stories in the Honolulu newspapers; but when any one came

by they would go in and view the chambers and the pictures. And the fame of the house went far and wide; it was called *Ka-Hale Nui*—the Great House—in all Kona; and sometimes the Bright House, for Keawe kept a Chinaman, who was all day dusting and furbishing; and the glass, and the gilt, and the fine stuffs, and the pictures, shone as bright as the morning. As for Keawe himself, he could not walk in the chambers without singing, his heart was so enlarged; and when ships sailed by upon the sea, he would fly his colours on the mast.

So time went by, until one day Keawe went upon a visit as far as Kailua to certain of his friends. There he was well feasted; and left as soon as he could the next morning, and rode hard, for he was impatient to behold his beautiful house; and, besides, the night then coming on was the night in which the dead of old days go abroad in the sides of Kona; and having already meddled with the devil, he was the more chary of meeting with the dead. A little beyond Honaunau, looking far ahead, he was aware of a woman bathing in the edge of the sea; and she seemed a well-grown girl, but he thought no more of it. Then he saw her white shift flutter as she put it on, and then her red holoku; and by the time he came abreast of her she was done with her toilet, and had come up from the sea, and stood by the track-side in her red holoku, and she was all freshened with the bath, and her

eyes shone and were kind. Now Keawe no sonner beheld her than he drew rein.

"I thought I knew every one in this country," said he. "How comes it that I do not know you?"

"I am Kokua, daughter of Kiano," said the girl, "and I have just returned from Oahu. Who are you?"

"I will tell you who I am in a little," said Keawe, dismounting from his horse, "but not now. For I have a thought in my mind, and if you knew who I was, you might have heard of me, and would not give me a true answer. But tell me, first of all, one thing: are you married?"

At this Kokua laughed out aloud. "It is you who ask questions," she said. "Are you married yourself?"

"Indeed, Kokua, I am not," replied Keawe, "and never thought to be until this hour. But here is the plain truth. I have met you here at the road-side, and I saw your eyes, which are like the stars, and my heart went to you as swift as a bird. And so now, if you want none of me, say so, and I will go on to my own place; but if you think me no worse than any other young man, say so, too, and I will turn aside to your father's for the night, and to-morrow I will talk with the good man."

Kokua said never a word, but she looked at the sea and laughed.

"Kokua," said Keawe, "if you say nothing, I will take that for the good answer; so let us be stepping to your father's door."

She went on ahead of him, still without speech; only sometimes she glanced back and glanced away again, and she kept the strings of her hat in her mouth.

Now, when they had come to the door, Kiano came out on his verandah, and cried out and welcomed Keawe by name. At that the girl looked over, for the fame of the great house had come to her ears; and, to be sure, it was a great temptation. All that evening they were very merry together; and the girl was as bold as brass under the eyes of her parents, and made a mark of Keawe, for she had a quick wit. The next day he had a word with Kiano, and found the girl alone.

"Kokua," said he, "you made a mark of me all the evening; and it is still time to bid me go. I would not tell you who I was, because I have so fine a house, and I feared you would think too much of that house and too little of the man that loves you. Now you know all, and if you wish to have seen the last of me, say so at once."

"No," said Kokua, but this time she did not laugh, nor did Keawe ask for more.

This was the wooing of Keawe; things had gone quickly; but so an arrow goes, and the ball of a rifle swifter still, and yet both may strike the target. Things had gone fast, but they had

gone far also, and the thought of Keawe rang in the maiden's head; she heard his voice in the breach of the surf upon the lava, and for this young man that she had seen but twice she would have left father and mother and her native islands. As for Keawe himself, his horse flew up the path of the mountain under the cliff of tombs, and the sound of the hoofs, and the sound of Keawe singing to himself for pleasure, echoed in the caverns of the dead. He came to the Bright House, and still he was singing. He sat and ate in the broad balcony, and the Chinaman wondered at his master, to hear how he sang between the mouthfuls. The sun went down into the sea, and the night came; and Keawe walked the balconies by lamplight, high on the mountains, and the voice of his singing startled men on ships.

"Here am I now upon my high place," he said to himself. "Life may be no better; this is the mountain top; and all shelves about me towards the worse. For the first time I will light up the chambers, and bathe in my fine bath with the hot water and the cold, and sleep above in the bed of my bridal chamber."

So the Chinaman had word, and he must rise from sleep and light the furnaces; and as he walked below, beside the boilers, he heard his master singing and rejoicing above him in the lighted chambers. When the water began to be hot the Chinaman cried to his master: and Keawe went into the bathroom; and the China-

man heard him sing as he filled the marble basin; and heard him sing, and the singing broken, as he undressed; until of a sudden, the song ceased. The Chinaman listened, and listened; he called up the house to Keawe to ask if all were well, and Keawe answered him "Yes," and bade him go to bed; but there was no more singing in the Bright House; and all night long the Chinaman heard his master's feet go round and round the balconies without repose.

Now, the truth of it was this: as Keawe undressed for his bath, he spied upon his flesh a patch like a patch of lichen on a rock, and it was then that he stopped singing. For he knew the likeness of that patch, and knew that he was fallen in the Chinese Evil.[1]

Now, it is a sad thing for any man to fall into this sickness. And it would be a sad thing for any one to leave a house so beautiful and so commodious, and depart from all his friends to the north coast of Molokai, between the mighty cliff and the sea-breakers. But what was that to the case of the man Keawe, he who had met his love but yesterday and won her but that morning, and now saw all his hopes break, in a moment, like a piece of glass?

A while he sat upon the edge of the bath, then sprang, with a cry, and ran outside; and to and fro, to and fro, along the balcony, like one despairing.

[1] Leprosy.

"Very willingly could I leave Hawaii, the home of my fathers," Keawe was thinking. "Very lightly could I leave my house, the high-placed, the many-windowed, here upon the mountains. Very bravely could I go to Molokai, to Kalaupapa by the cliffs, to live with the smitten and to sleep there, far from my fathers. But what wrong have I done, what sin lies upon my soul, that I should have encountered Kokua coming cool from the sea-water in the evening? Kokua, the soul ensnarer! Kokua, the light of my life! Her may I never wed, her may I look upon no longer, her may I no more handle with my loving hand; and it is for this, it is for you, O Kokua! that I pour my lamentations!"

Now you are to observe what sort of a man Keawe was, for he might have dwelt there in the Bright House for years, and no one been the wiser of his sickness; but he reckoned nothing of that, if he must lose Kokua. And again he might have wed Kokua even as he was; and so many would have done, because they have the souls of pigs; but Keawe loved the maid manfully, and he would do her no hurt and bring her in no danger.

A little beyond the midst of the night, there came in his mind the recollection of that bottle. He went round to the back porch, and called to memory the day when the devil had looked forth; and at the thought ice ran in his veins.

"A dreadful thing is the bottle," thought

Keawe, "and dreadful is the imp, and it is a dreadful thing to risk the flames of hell. But what other hope have I to cure my sickness or to wed Kokua? What!" he thought, "would I beard the devil once, only to get me a house, and not face him again to win Kokua?"

Thereupon he called to mind it was the next day the *Hall* went by on her return to Honolulu. "There must I go first," he thought, "and see Lopaka. For the best hope that I have now is to find that same bottle I was so pleased to be rid of."

Never a wink could he sleep; the food stuck in his throat; but he sent a letter to Kiano, and about the time when the steamer would be coming, rode down beside the cliff of the tombs. It rained; his horse went heavily; he looked up at the black mouths of the caves, and he envied the dead that slept there and were done with trouble; and called to mind how he had galloped by the day before, and was astonished. So he came down to Hookena, and there was all the country gathered for the steamer as usual. In the shed before the store they sat and jested and passed the news; but there was no matter of speech in Keawe's bosom, and he sat in their midst and looked without on the rain falling on the houses, and the surf beating among the rocks, and the sighs arose in his throat.

"Keawe of the Bright House is out of spirits," said one to another. Indeed, and so he was, and little wonder.

Then the *Hall* came, and the whale-boat carried him on board. The after-part of the ship was full of Haoles[1]—who had been to visit the volcano, as their custom is; and the midst was crowded with Kanakas, and the fore-part with wild bulls from Hilo and horses from Kau; but Keawe sat apart from all in his sorrow, and watched for the house of Kiano. There it sat low upon the shore in the black rocks, and shaded by the cocoa-palms, and there by the door was a red holoku, no greater than a fly, and going to and fro with a fly's busyness. "Ah, queen of my heart," he cried, "I'll venture my dear soul to win you!"

Soon after darkness fell and the cabins were lit up, and the Haoles sat and played at the cards and drank whiskey as their custom is; but Keawe walked the deck all night; and all the next day, as they steamed under the lea of Maui or of Molokai, he was still pacing to and fro like a wild animal in a menagerie.

Towards evening they passed Diamond Head, and came to the pier of Honolulu. Keawe stepped out among the crowd and began to ask for Lopaka. It seemed he had become the owner of a schooner—none better in the islands—and was gone upon an adventure as far as Pola-Pola or Kahiki; so there was no help to be looked for from Lopaka. Keawe called to mind a friend of his, a lawyer in the town (I must not

[1] Whites.

tell his name), and inquired of him. They said he was grown suddenly rich, and had a fine new house upon Waikiki shore; and this put a thought in Keawe's head, and he called a hack and drove to the lawyer's house.

The house was all brand new, and the trees in the garden no greater than walking-sticks, and the lawyer, when he came, had the air of a man well pleased.

"What can I do to serve you?" said the lawyer.

"You are a friend of Lopaka's," replied Keawe, "and Lopaka purchased from me a certain piece of goods that I thought you might enable me to trace."

The lawyer's face became very dark. "I do not profess to misunderstand you, Mr. Keawe," said he, "though this is an ugly business to be stirring in. You may be sure I know nothing, but yet I have a guess, and if you would apply in a certain quarter I think you might have news."

And he named the name of a man, which, again, I had better not repeat. So it was for days, and Keawe went from one to another, finding everywhere new clothes and carriages, and fine new houses and men everywhere in great contentment, although, to be sure, when he hinted at his business their faces would cloud over.

"No doubt I am upon the track," thought

Keawe. "These new clothes and carriages are all the gifts of the little imp, and these glad faces are the faces of men who have taken their profit and got rid of the accursed thing in safety. When I see pale cheeks and hear sighing, I shall know that I am near the bottle."

So it befell at last that he was recommended to a Haole in Beritania Street. When he came to the door, about the hour of the evening meal, there were the usual marks of the new house, and the young garden, and the electric light shining in the windows; but when the owner came, a shock of hope and fear ran through Keawe; for here was a young man, white as a corpse, and black about the eyes, the hair shedding from his head, and such a look in his countenance as a man may have when he is waiting for the gallows.

"Here it is, to be sure," thought Keawe, and so with this man he noways veiled his errand. "I am come to buy the bottle," said he.

At the word, the young Haole of Beritania Street reeled against the wall.

"The bottle!" he gasped. "To buy the bottle!" Then he seemed to choke, and seizing Keawe by the arm, carried him into a room and poured out wine in two glasses.

"Here is my respects," said Keawe, who had been much about with Haoles in his time. "Yes," he added, "I am come to buy the bottle. What is the price by now?"

At that word the young man let his glass slip through his fingers, and looked upon Keawe like a ghost.

"The price," says he; "the price! You do not know the price?"

"It is for that I am asking you," returned Keawe. "But why are you so much concerned? Is there anything wrong about the price?"

"It has dropped a great deal in value since your time, Mr. Keawe," said the young man, stammering.

"Well, well, I shall have the less to pay for it," says Keawe. "How much did it cost you?"

The young man was as white as a sheet. "Two cents," said he.

"What?" cried Keawe, "two cents? Why, then, you can only sell it for one. And he who buys it——" The words died upon Keawe's tongue; he who bought it could never sell it again, the bottle and the bottle imp must abide with him until he died, and when he died must carry him to the red end of hell.

The young man of Beritania Street fell upon his knees. "For God's sake, buy it!" he cried. "You can have all my fortune in the bargain. I was mad when I bought it at that price. I had embezzled money at my store; I was lost else; I must have gone to jail."

"Poor creature," said Keawe, "you would risk your soul upon so desperate an adventure,

and to avoid the proper punishment of your own disgrace; and you think I could hesitate with love in front of me. Give me the bottle, and the change which I make sure you have all ready. Here is a five-cent piece."

It was as Keawe supposed; the young man had the change ready in a drawer; the bottle changed hands, and Keawe's fingers were no sooner clasped upon the stalk than he had breathed his wish to be a clean man. And, sure enough, when he got home to his room, and stripped himself before a glass, his flesh was whole like an infant's. And here was the strange thing: he had no sooner seen this miracle than his mind was changed within him, and he cared naught for the Chinese Evil, and little enough for Kokua; and had but the one thought, that here he was bound to the bottle imp for time and for eternity, and had no better hope but to be a cinder for ever in the flames of hell. Away ahead of him he saw them blaze with his mind's eye, and his soul shrank, and darkness fell upon the light.

When Keawe came to himself a little, he was aware it was the night when the band played at the hotel. Thither he went, because he feared to be alone; and there, among happy faces, walked to and fro, and heard the tunes go up and down, and saw Berger beat the measure, and all the while he heard the flames crackle and saw the red fire burning in the bottomless pit. Of a sudden the band played *Hiki-ao-ao;*

that was a song that he had sung with Kokua, and at the strain courage returned to him.

"It is done now," he thought, "and once more let me take the good along with the evil."

So it befell that he returned to Hawaii by the first steamer, and as soon as it could be managed he was wedded to Kokua, and carried her up the mountain side to the Bright House.

Now it was so with these two, that when they were together Keawe's heart was stilled; but as soon as he was alone he fell into a brooding horror, and heard the flames crackle, and saw the red fire burn in the bottomless pit. The girl, indeed, had come to him wholly; her heart leaped in her side at sight of him, her hand clung to his; and she was so fashioned, from the hair upon her head to the nails upon her toes, that none could see her without joy. She was pleasant in her nature. She had the good word always. Full of song she was, and went to and fro in the Bright House, the brightest thing in its three stories, carolling like the birds. And Keawe beheld and heard her with delight, and then must shrink upon one side, and weep and groan to think upon the price that he had paid for her; and then he must dry his eyes, and wash his face, and go and sit with her on the broad balconies, joining in her songs, and, with a sick spirit, answering her smiles.

There came a day when her feet began to be heavy and her songs more rare; and now it was

not Keawe only that would weep apart, but each would sunder from the other and sit in opposite balconies with the whole width of the Bright House betwixt. Keawe was so sunk in his despair, he scarce observed the change, and was only glad he had more hours to sit alone and brood upon his destiny, and was not so frequently condemned to pull a smiling face on a sick heart. But one day, coming softly through the house, he heard the sound of a child sobbing, and there was Kokua rolling her face upon the balcony floor, and weeping like the lost.

"You do well to weep in this house, Kokua," he said. "And yet I would give the head off my body that you (at least) might have been happy."

"Happy!" she cried. "Keawe, when you lived alone in your Bright House you were the word of the island for a happy man; laughter and song were in your mouth, and your face was as bright as the sunrise. Then you wedded poor Kokua; and the good God knows what is amiss in her—but from that day you have not smiled. Oh!" she cried, "what ails me? I thought I was pretty, and I knew I loved him. What ails me, that I throw this cloud upon my husband?"

"Poor Kokua," said Keawe. He sat down by her side, and sought to take her hand; but that she plucked away. "Poor Kokua," he said again. "My poor child—my pretty. And I had thought all this while to spare you! Well,

you shall know all. Then, at least, you will pity poor Keawe; then you will understand how much he loved you in the past—that he dared hell for your possession—and how much he loves you still (the poor condemned one), that he can yet call up a smile when he beholds you."

With that he told her all, even from the beginning.

"You have done this for me?" she cried. "Ah, well, then what do I care!" and she clasped and wept upon him.

"Ah, child!" said Keawe, "and yet, when I consider of the fire of hell, I care a good deal!"

"Never tell me," said she, "no man can be lost because he loved Kokua, and no other fault. I tell you, Keawe, I shall save you with these hands, or perish in your company. What! you loved me and gave your soul, and you think I will not die to save you in return?"

"Ah, my dear, you might die a hundred times, and what difference would that make?" he cried, "except to leave me lonely till the time comes of my damnation?"

"You know nothing," said she. "I was educated in a school in Honolulu; I am no common girl. And I tell you I shall save my lover. What is this you say about a cent? But all the world is not American. In England they have a piece they call a farthing, which is about half a cent. Ah! sorrow!" she cried, "that makes it scarcely better, for the buyer must be

lost, and we shall find none so brave as my Keawe! But, then, there is France; they have a small coin there which they call a centime, and these go five to the cent, or thereabout. We could not do better. Come, Keawe, let us go to the French islands; let us go to Tahiti, as fast as ships can bear us. There we have four centimes, three centimes, two centimes, one centime; four possible sales to come and go on; and two of us to push the bargain. Come, my Keawe! kiss me, and banish care. Kokua will defend you."

"Gift of God!" he cried. "I cannot think that God will punish me for desiring aught so good! Be it as you will, then, take me where you please: I put my life and my salvation in your hands."

Early the next day Kokua was about her preparations. She took Keawe's chest that he went with sailoring; and first she put the bottle in a corner, and then packed it with the richest of their clothes and the bravest of the knick-knacks in the house. "For," said she, "we must seem to be rich folks, or who will believe in the bottle?" All the time of her preparation she was as gay as a bird; only when she looked upon Keawe the tears would spring in her eye, and she must run and kiss him. As for Keawe, a weight was off his soul; now that he had his secret shared, and some hope in front of him, he seemed like a new man, his feet went lightly on the earth, and his breath was good to him

again. Yet was terror still at his elbow; and ever and again, as the wind blows out a taper, hope died in him, and he saw the flames toss and the red fire burn in hell.

It was given out in the country they were gone pleasuring to the States, which was thought a strange thing, and yet not so strange as the truth, if any could have guessed it. So they went to Honolulu in the *Hall*, and thence in the *Umatilla* to San Francisco with a crowd of Haoles, and at San Francisco took their passage by the mail brigantine, the *Tropic Bird*, for Papeete, the chief place of the French in the south islands. Thither they came, after a pleasant voyage, on a fair day of the Trade Wind, and saw the reef with the surf breaking and Motuiti with its palms, and the schooner riding withinside, and the white houses of the town low down along the shore among green trees, and overhead the mountains and the clouds of Tahiti, the wise island.

It was judged the most wise to hire a house, which they did accordingly, opposite the British Consul's, to make a great parade of money, and themselves conspicuous with carriages and horses. This it was very easy to do, so long as they had the bottle in their possession; for Kokua was more bold than Keawe, and, whenever she had a mind, called on the imp for twenty or a hundred dollars. At this rate they soon grew to be remarked in the town; and the stran-

gers from Hawaii, their riding and their driving, the fine holokus, and the rich lace of Kokua, became the matter of much talk.

They got on well after the first with the Tahitian language, which is indeed like to the Hawaiian, with a change of certain letters; and as soon as they had any freedom of speech, began to push the bottle. You are to consider it was not an easy subject to introduce; it was not easy to persuade people you are in earnest, when you offer to sell them for four centimes the spring of health and riches inexhaustible. It was necessary besides to explain the dangers of the bottle; and either people disbelieved the whole thing and laughed, or they thought the more of the darker part, became overcast with gravity, and drew away from Keawe and Kokua, as from persons who had dealings with the devil. So far from gaining ground, these two began to find they were avoided in the town; the children ran away from them screaming, a thing intolerable to Kokua; Catholics crossed themselves as they went by; and all persons began with one accord to disengage themselves from their advances.

Depression fell upon their spirits. They would sit at night in their new house, after a day's weariness, and not exchange one word, or the silence would be broken by Kokua bursting suddenly into sobs. Sometimes they would pray together; sometimes they would have the bottle out upon the floor, and sit all evening

watching how the shadow hovered in the midst. At such times they would be afraid to go to rest. It was long ere slumber came to them, and, if either dozed off, it would be to wake and find the other silently weeping in the dark, or, perhaps, to wake alone, the other having fled from the house and the neighbourhood of that bottle, to pace under the bananas in the little garden, or to wander on the beach by moonlight.

One night it was so when Kokua awoke. Keawe was gone. She felt in the bed and his place was cold. Then fear fell upon her, and she sat up in bed. A little moonshine filtered through the shutters. The room was bright, and she could spy the bottle on the floor. Outside it blew high, the great trees of the avenue cried aloud, and the fallen leaves rattled in the verandah. In the midst of this Kokua was aware of another sound; whether of a beast or of a man she could scarce tell, but it was as sad as death, and cut her to the soul. Softly she arose, set the door ajar, and looked forth into the moonlit yard. There, under the bananas, lay Keawe, his mouth in the dust, and as he lay he moaned.

It was Kokua's first thought to run forward and console him; her second potently withheld her. Keawe had borne himself before his wife like a brave man; it became her little in the hour of weakness to intrude upon his shame. With the thought she drew back into the house.

"Heaven," she thought, "how careless have I

been—how weak! It is he, not I, that stands in this eternal peril; it was he, not I, that took the curse upon his soul. It is for my sake, and for the love of a creature of so little worth and such poor help, that he now beholds so close to him the flames of hell—ay, and smells the smoke of it, lying without there in the wind and moonlight. Am I so dull of spirit that never till now I have surmised my duty, or have I seen it before and turned aside? But now, at least, I take up my soul in both the hands of my affection; now I say farewell to the white steps of heaven and the waiting faces of my friends. A love for a love, and let mine be equalled with Keawe's! A soul for a soul, and be it mine to perish!"

She was a deft woman with her hands, and was soon apparelled. She took in her hands the change—the precious centimes they kept ever at their side; for this coin is little used, and they had made provision at a government office. When she was forth in the avenue clouds came on the wind, and the moon was blackened. The town slept, and she knew not whither to turn till she heard one coughing in the shadow of the trees.

"Old man," said Kokua, "what do you here abroad in the cold night?"

The old man could scarce express himself for coughing, but she made out that he was old and poor, and a stranger in the island.

"Will you do me a service?" said Kokua. "As one stranger to another, and as an old man to a young woman, will you help a daughter of Hawaii?"

"Ah," said the old man. "So you are the witch from the Eight Islands, and even my old soul you seek to entangle. But I have heard of you, and defy your wickedness."

"Sit down here," said Kokua, "and let me tell you a tale." And she told him the story of Keawe from the beginning to the end.

"And now," said she, "I am his wife, whom he bought with his soul's welfare. And what should I do? If I went to him myself and offered to buy it, he will refuse. But if you go, he will sell it eagerly; I will await you here; you will buy it for four centimes, and I will buy it again for three. And the Lord strengthen a poor girl!"

"If you meant falsely," said the old man, "I think God would strike you dead."

"He would!" cried Kokua. "Be sure he would. I could not be so treacherous; God would not suffer it."

"Give me the four centimes and await me here," said the old man.

Now, when Kokua stood alone in the street, her spirit died. The wind roared in the trees, and it seemed to her the rushing of the flames of hell; the shadows towered in the light of the street lamp, and they seemed to her the snatch-

ing hands of evil ones. If she had had the strength, she must have run away, and if she had had the breath, she must have screamed aloud; but, in truth, she could do neither, and stood and trembled in the avenue, like an affrighted child.

Then she saw the old man returning, and he had the bottle in his hand.

"I have done your bidding," said he, "I left your husband weeping like a child; to-night he will sleep easy." And he held the bottle forth.

"Before you give it me," Kokua panted, "take the good with the evil—ask to be delivered from your cough."

"I am an old man," replied the other, "and too near the gate of the grave to take a favour from the devil. But what is this? Why do you not take the bottle? Do you hesitate?"

"Not hesitate!" cried Kokua. "I am only weak. Give me a moment. It is my hand resists, my flesh shrinks back from the accursed thing. One moment only!"

The old man looked upon Kokua kindly. "Poor child!" said he, "you fear: your soul misgives you. Well, let me keep it. I am old, and can never more be happy in this world, and as for the next——"

"Give it me!" gasped Kokua. "There is your money. Do you think I am so base as that? Give me the bottle."

"God bless you, child," said the old man.

Kokua concealed the bottle under her holoku, said farewell to the old man, and walked off along the avenue, she cared not whither. For all roads were now the same to her, and led equally to hell. Sometimes she walked, and sometimes ran; sometimes she screamed out loud in the night, and sometimes lay by the wayside in the dust and wept. All that she had heard of hell came back to her; she saw the flames blaze, and she smelled the smoke, and her flesh withered on the coals.

Near day she came to her mind again, and returned to the house. It was even as the old man said—Keawe slumbered like a child. Kokua stood and gazed upon his face.

"Now, my husband," said she, "it is your turn to sleep. When you wake it will be your turn to sing and laugh. But for poor Kokua, alas! that meant no evil—for poor Kokua no more sleep, no more singing, no more delight, whether in earth or Heaven."

With that she lay down in the bed by his side, and her misery was so extreme that she fell in a deep slumber instantly.

Late in the morning her husband woke her and gave her the good news. It seemed he was silly with delight, for he paid no heed to her distress, ill though she dissembled it. The words stuck in her mouth, it mattered not; Keawe did the speaking. She ate not a bite, but who was to observe it? For Keawe cleared the dish.

Kokua saw and heard him, like some strange thing in a dream; there were times when she forgot or doubted, and put her hands to her brow; to know herself doomed and hear her husband babble, seemed so monstrous.

All the while Keawe was eating and talking, and planning the time of their return, and thanking her for saving him and fondling her, and calling her the true helper after all. He laughed at the old man that was fool enough to buy that bottle.

"A worthy old man he seemed," Keawe said. "But no one can judge by appearances. For why did the old reprobate require the bottle?"

"My husband," said Kokua, humbly, "his purpose may have been good."

Keawe laughed like an angry man.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" cried Keawe. "An old rogue, I tell you; and an old ass to boot. For the bottle was hard enough to sell at four centimes; and at three it will be quite impossible. The margin is not broad enough, the thing begins to smell of scorching—brrr!" said he, and shuddered. "It is true I bought it myself at a cent, when I knew not there were smaller coins. I was a fool for my pains; there will never be found another, and whoever has that bottle now will carry it to the pit."

"O my husband!" said Kokua. "Is it not a terrible thing to save oneself by the eternal ruin of another? It seems to me I could not laugh.

I would be humbled. I would be filled with melancholy. I would pray for the poor holder."

Then Keawe, because he felt the truth of what she said, grew the more angry. "Heighty-teighty!" cried he. "You may be filled with melancholy if you please. It is not the mind of a good wife. If you thought at all of me, you would sit shamed."

Thereupon he went out, and Kokua was alone.

What chance had she to sell that bottle at two centimes? None, she perceived. And if she had any, here was her husband hurrying her away to a country where there was nothing lower than a cent. And here—on the morrow of her sacrifice—was her husband leaving her and blaming her.

She would not even try to profit by what time she had, but sat in the house, and now had the bottle out and viewed it with unutterable fear, and now, with loathing, hid it out of sight.

By and by, Keawe came back, and would have her take a drive.

"My husband, I am ill," she said. "I am out of heart. Excuse me, I can take no pleasure."

Then was Keawe more wroth than ever. With her, because he thought she was brooding over the case of the old man; and with himself, because he thought she was right and was ashamed to be so happy.

"This is your truth," cried he, "and this your

affection! Your husband is just saved from eternal ruin, which he encountered for the love of you—and you can take no pleasure! Kokua, you have a disloyal heart."

He went forth again furious, and wandered in the town all day. He met friends, and drank with them; they hired a carriage and drove into the country, and there drank again. All the time Keawe was ill at ease, because he was taking this pastime while his wife was sad, and because he knew in his heart that she was more right than he; and the knowledge made him drink the deeper.

Now there was an old brutal Haole drinking with him, one that had been a boatswain of a whaler—a runaway, a digger in gold mines, a convict in prisons. He had a low mind and a foul mouth; he loved to drink and to see others drunken; and he pressed the glass upon Keawe. Soon there was no more money in the company.

"Here, you!" says the boatswain, "you are rich, you have been always saying. You have a bottle or some foolishness."

"Yes," says Keawe, "I am rich; I will go back and get some money from my wife, who keeps it."

"That's a bad idea, mate," said the boatswain. "Never you trust a petticoat with dollars. They're all as false as water; you keep an eye on her."

Now this word struck in Keawe's mind; for he was muddled with what he had been drinking.

"I should not wonder but she was false, indeed," thought he. "Why else should she be so cast down at my release? But I will show her I am not the man to be fooled. I will catch her in the act."

Accordingly, when they were back in town, Keawe bade the boatswain wait for him at the corner, by the old calaboose, and went forward up the avenue alone to the door of his house. The night had come again; there was a light within, but never a sound; and Keawe crept about the corner, opened the back door softly, and looked in.

There was Kokua on the floor, the lamp at her side; before her was a milk-white bottle, with a round belly and a long neck; and as she viewed it, Kokua wrung her hands.

A long time Keawe stood and looked in the doorway. At first he was struck stupid; and then fear fell upon him that the bargain had been made amiss, and the bottle had come back to him as it came at San Francisco; and at that his knees were loosened, and the fumes of the wine departed from his head like mists off a river in the morning And then he had another thought; and it was a strange one, that made his cheeks to burn.

"I must make sure of this," thought he.

So he closed the door, and went softly round the corner again, and then came noisily in, as though he were but now returned. And, lo! by the time he opened the front door no bottle was to be seen; and Kokua sat in a chair and started up like one awakened out of sleep.

"I have been drinking all day and making merry," said Keawe. "I have been with good companions, and now I only come back for money, and return to drink and carouse with them again."

Both his face and voice were as stern as judgment, but Kokua was too troubled to observe.

"You do well to use your own, my husband," said she, and her words trembled.

"Oh, I do well in all things," said Keawe, and he went straight to the chest and took out money. But he looked besides in the corner where they kept the bottle, and there was no bottle there.

At that the chest heaved upon the floor like a sea-billow, and the house span about him like a wreath of smoke, for he saw she was lost now, and there was no escape. "It is what I feared," he thought. "It is she who has bought it."

And then he came to himself a little and rose up; but the sweat streamed on his face as thick as the rain and as cold as the well-water.

"Kokua," said he, "I said to you to-day what ill became me. Now I return to house with my

jolly companions," and at that he laughed a little quietly. "I will take more pleasure in the cup if you forgive me."

She clasped his knees in a moment, she kissed his knees with flowing tears.

"Oh," she cried, "I asked but a kind word!"

"Let us never one think hardly of the other," said Keawe, and was gone out of the house.

Now, the money that Keawe had taken was only some of that store of centime pieces they had laid in at their arrival. It was very sure he had no mind to be drinking. His wife had given her soul for him, now he must give his for hers; no other thought was in the world with him.

At the corner, by the old calaboose, there was the boatswain waiting.

"My wife has the bottle," said Keawe, "and, unless you help me to recover it, there can be no more money and no more liquor to-night."

"You do not mean to say you are serious about that bottle?" cried the boatswain.

"There is the lamp," said Keawe. "Do I look as if I was jesting?"

"That is so," said the boatswain. "You look as serious as a ghost."

"Well, then," said Keawe, "here are two centimes; you must go to my wife in the house, and offer her these for the bottle, which (if I am not much mistaken) she will give you instantly. Bring it to me here, and I will buy it back

from you for one; for that is the law with this bottle that it still must be sold for a less sum. But whatever you do, never breathe a word to her that you have come from me."

"Mate, I wonder are you making a fool of me?" asked the boatswain.

"It will do you no harm if I am," returned Keawe.

"That is so, mate," said the boatswain.

"And if you doubt me," added Keawe, "you can try. As soon as you are clear of the house, wish to have your pocket full of money, or a bottle of the best rum, or what you please, and you will see the virtue of the thing."

"Very well, Kanaka," says the boatswain. "I will try; but if you are having your fun out of me, I will take my fun out of you with a belaying-pin."

So the whaler-man went off up the avenue; and Keawe stood and waited. It was near the same spot where Kokua had waited the night before; but Keawe was more resolved, and never faltered in his purpose; only his soul was bitter with despair.

It seemed a long time he had to wait before he heard a voice singing in the darkness of the avenue. He knew the voice to be the boatswain's; but it was strange how drunken it appeared upon a sudden.

Next the man himself came stumbling into the light of the lamp. He had the devil's bottle

buttoned in his coat; another bottle was in his hand; and even as he came in view he raised it to his mouth and drank.

"You have it," said Keawe. "I see that."

"Hands off!" cried the boatswain, jumping back. "Take a step near me, and I'll smash your mouth. You thought you could make a catspaw of me, did you?"

"What do you mean?" cried Keawe.

"Mean?" cried the boatswain. "This is a pretty good bottle, this is; that's what I mean. How I got it for two centimes I can't make out; but I am sure you sha'n't have it for one."

"You mean you won't sell?" gasped Keawe.

"No, sir," cried the boatswain. "But I'll give you a drink of the rum, if you like."

"I tell you," said Keawe, "the man who has that bottle goes to hell."

"I reckon I'm going anyway," returned the sailor; "and this bottle's the best thing to go with I've struck yet. No, sir!" he cried again, "this is my bottle now, and you can go and fish for another."

"Can this be true?" Keawe cried. "For your own sake, I beseech you, sell it me!"

"I don't value any of your talk," replied the boatswain. "You thought I was a flat, now you see I'm not; and there's an end. If you won't have a swallow of the rum, I'll have one myself. Here's your health, and good-night to you!"

So off he went down the avenue towards town, and there goes the bottle out of the story.

But Keawe ran to Kokua light as the wind; and great was their joy that night; and great, since then, has been the peace of all their days in the Bright House.

THE ISLE OF VOICES

THE ISLE OF VOICES

KEOLA was married with Lehua, daughter of Kalamake, the wise man of Molokai, and he kept his dwelling with the father of his wife. There was no man more cunning than that prophet; he read the stars, he could divine by the bodies of the dead, and by the means of evil creatures: he could go alone into the highest parts of the mountain, into the region of the hobgoblins, and there he would lay snares to entrap the spirits of the ancient.

For this reason no man was more consulted in all the Kingdom of Hawaii. Prudent people bought, and sold, and married, and laid out their lives by his counsels; and the King had him twice to Kona to seek the treasures of Kamehameha. Neither was any man more feared: of his enemies, some had dwindled in sickness by the virtue of his incantations, and some had been spirited away, the life and the clay both, so that folk looked in vain for so much as a bone of their bodies. It was rumoured that he had the art or the gift of the old heroes. Men had seen him

at night upon the mountains, stepping from one cliff to the next; they had seen him walking in the high forest, and his head and shoulders were above the trees.

This Kalamake was a strange man to see. He was come of the best blood in Molokai and Maui, of a pure descent; and yet he was more white to look upon than any foreigner; his hair the colour of dry grass, and his eyes red and very blind, so that "Blind as Kalamake that can see across to-morrow," was a byword in the islands.

Of all these doings of his father-in-law, Keola knew a little by the common repute, a little more he suspected, and the rest he ignored. But there was one thing troubled him. Kalamake was a man that spared for nothing, whether to eat or to drink, or to wear; and for all he paid in bright new dollars. "Bright as Kalamake's dollars," was another saying in the Eight Isles. Yet he neither sold, nor planted, nor took hire —only now and then from his sorceries—and there was no source conceivable for so much silver coin.

It chanced one day Keola's wife was gone upon a visit to Kaunakakai on the lee side of the island, and the men were forth at the sea-fishing. But Keola was an idle dog, and he lay in the verandah and watched the surf beat on the shore and the birds fly about the cliff. It was a chief thought with him always—the thought of the bright dollars. When he lay down to bed he

would be wondering why they were so many, and when he woke at morn he would be wondering why they were all new; and the thing was never absent from his mind. But this day of all days he made sure in his heart of some discovery. For it seems he had observed the place where Kalamake kept his treasure, which was a lock-fast desk against the parlour wall, under the print of Kamehameha the fifth, and a photograph of Queen Victoria with her crown; and it seems again that, no later than the night before, he found occasion to look in, and behold! the bag lay there empty. And this was the day of the steamer; he could see her smoke off Kalaupapa; and she must soon arrive with a month's goods, tinned salmon and gin, and all manner of rare luxuries for Kalamake.

"Now if he can pay for his goods to-day," Keola thought, "I shall know for certain that the man is a warlock, and the dollars come out of the devil's pocket."

While he was so thinking, there was his father-in-law behind him, looking vexed.

"Is that the steamer?" he asked.

"Yes," said Keola. "She has but to call at Pelekunu, and then she will be here."

"There is no help for it then," returned Kalamake, "and I must take you in my confidence, Keola, for the lack of any one better. Come here within the house."

So they stepped together into the parlour,

which was a very fine room, papered and hung with prints, and furnished with a rocking-chair, and a table and a sofa in the European style. There was a shelf of books besides, and a family Bible in the midst of the table, and the lock-fast writing-desk against the wall; so that any one could see it was the house of a man of substance.

Kalamake made Keola close the shutters of the windows, while he himself locked all the doors and set open the lid of the desk. From this he brought forth a pair of necklaces hung with charms and shells, a bundle of dried herbs, and the dried leaves of trees, and a green branch of palm.

"What I am about," said he, "is a thing beyond wonder. The men of old were wise; they wrought marvels, and this among the rest; but that was at night, in the dark, under the fit stars and in the desert. The same will I do here in my own house, and under the plain eye of day." So saying, he put the Bible under the cushion of the sofa so that it was all covered, brought out from the same place a mat of a wonderfully fine texture, and heaped the herbs and leaves on sand in a tin pan. And then he and Keola put on the necklaces, and took their stand upon the opposite corners of the mat.

"The time comes," said the warlock, "be not afraid."

With that he set flame to the herbs, and began to mutter and wave the branch of palm. At

first the light was dim because of the closed shutters; but the herbs caught strongly afire, and the flames beat upon Keola, and the room glowed with the burning; and next the smoke rose and made his head swim and his eyes darken, and the sound of Kalamake muttering ran in his ears. And suddenly, to the mat on which they were standing came a snatch or twitch, that seemed to be more swift than lightning. In the same wink the room was gone, and the house, the breath all beaten from Keola's body. Volumes of sun rolled upon his eyes and head, and he found himself transported to a beach of the sea, under a strong sun, with a great surf roaring: he and the warlock standing there on the same mat, speechless, gasping and grasping at one another, and passing their hands before their eyes.

"What was this?" cried Keola, who came to himself the first, because he was the younger. "The pang of it was like death."

"It matters not," panted Kalamake. "It is now done."

"And, in the name of God, where are we?" cried Keola.

"That is not the question," replied the sorcerer. "Being here, we have matter in our hands, and that we must attend to. Go, while I recover my breath, into the borders of the wood, and bring me the leaves of such and such an herb, and such and such a tree, which you

will find to grow there plentifully—three handfuls of each. And be speedy. We must be home again before the steamer comes; it would seem strange if we had disappeared." And he sat on the sand and panted.

Keola went up the beach, which was of shining sand and coral, strewn with singular shells; and he thought in his heart:

"How do I not know this beach? I will come here again and gather shells."

In front of him was a line of palms against the sky; not like the palms of the Eight Islands, but tall and fresh and beautiful, and hanging out withered fans like gold among the green, and he thought in his heart:

"It is strange I should not have found this grove. I will come here again, when it is warm, to sleep." And he thought, "How warm it has grown suddenly!" For it was winter in Hawaii, and the day had been chill. And he thought also, "Where are the grey mountains? And where is the high cliff with the hanging forest and the wheeling birds?" And the more he considered, the less he might conceive in what quarter of the islands he was fallen.

In the border of the grove, where it met the beach, the herb was growing, but the tree further back. Now, as Keola went towards the tree, he was aware of a young woman who had nothing on her body but a belt of leaves.

"Well!" thought Keola, "they are not very

particular about their dress in this part of the country." And he paused, supposing she would observe him and escape; and seeing that she still looked before her, stood and hummed aloud. Up she leaped at the sound. Her face was ashen; she looked this way and that, and her mouth gaped with the terror of her soul. But it was a strange thing that her eyes did not rest upon Keola.

"Good-day," said he. "You need not be so frightened, I will not eat you." And he had scarce opened his mouth before the young woman fled into the bush.

"These are strange manners," thought Keola, and, not thinking what he did, ran after her.

As she ran, the girl kept crying in some speech that was not practised in Hawaii, yet some of the words were the same, and he knew she kept calling and warning others. And presently he saw more people running—men, women, and children, one with another, all running and crying like people at a fire. And with that he began to grow afraid himself, and returned to Kalamake bringing the leaves. Him he told what he had seen.

"You must pay no heed," said Kalamake. "All this is like a dream and shadows. All will disappear and be forgotten."

"It seemed none saw me," said Keola.

"And none did," replied the sorcerer. "We

walk here in the broad sun invisible by reason of these charms. Yet they hear us; and therefore it is well to speak softly, as I do."

With that he made a circle round the mat with stones, and in the midst he set the leaves.

"It will be your part," said he, "to keep the leaves alight, and feed the fire slowly. While they blaze (which is but for a little moment) I must do my errand; and before the ashes blacken, the same power that brought us carries us away. Be ready now with the match; and do you call me in good time lest the flames burn out and I be left."

As soon as the eaves caught, the sorcerer leaped like a deer out of the circle, and began to race along the beach like a hound that has been bathing. As he ran, he kept stooping to snatch shells; and it seemed to Keola that they glittered as he took them. The leaves blazed with a clear flame that consumed them swiftly; and presently Keola had but a handful left, and the sorcerer was far off, running and stopping.

"Back!" cried Keola. "Back! The leaves are near done."

At that Kalamake turned, and if he had run before, now he flew. But fast as he ran, the leaves burned faster. The flame was ready to expire when, with a great leap, he bounded on the mat. The wind of his leaping blew it out; and with that the beach was gone, and the sun and the sea; and they stood once more in the

dimness of the shuttered parlour, and were once more shaken and blinded; and on the mat betwixt them lay a pile of shining dollars. Keola ran to the shutters; and there was the steamer tossing in the swell close in.

The same night Kalamake took his son-in-law apart, and gave him five dollars in his hand.

"Keola," said he; "if you are a wise man (which I am doubtful of) you will think you slept this afternoon on the verandah, and dreamed as you were sleeping. I am a man of few words, and I have for my helpers people of short memories."

Never a word more said Kalamake, nor referred again to that affair. But it ran all the while in Keola's head—if he were lazy before, he would now do nothing.

"Why should I work," thought he, "when I have a father-in-law who makes dollars of seashells?"

Presently his share was spent. He spent it all upon fine clothes. And then he was sorry:

"For," thought he, "I had done better to have bought a concertina, with which I might have entertained myself all day long." And then he began to grow vexed with Kalamake.

"This man has the soul of a dog," thought he. "He can gather dollars when he pleases on the beach, and he leaves me to pine for a concertina! Let him beware: I am no child, I am as cunning as he, and hold his secret." With that he spoke

to his wife Lehua, and complained of her father's manners.

"I would let my father be," said Lehua. "He is a dangerous man to cross."

"I care that for him!" cried Keola; and snapped his fingers. "I have him by the nose. I can make him do what I please." And he told Lehua the story.

But she shook her head.

"You may do what you like," said she; "but as sure as you thwart my father, you will be no more heard of. Think of this person, and that person; think of Hua, who was a noble of the House of Representatives, and went to Honolulu every year; and not a bone or a hair of him was found. Remember Kamau, and how he wasted to a thread, so that his wife lifted him with one hand. Keola, you are a baby in my father's hands; he will take you with his thumb and finger and eat you like a shrimp."

Now Keola was truly afraid of Kalamake, but he was vain too; and these words of his wife's incensed him.

"Very well," said he, "if that is what you think of me, I will show how much you are deceived." And he went straight to where his father-in-law was sitting in the parlour.

"Kalamake," said he, "I want a concertina."

"Do you, indeed?" said Kalamake.

"Yes," said he, "and I may as well tell you plainly, I mean to have it. A man who picks up

dollars on the beach can certainly afford a concertina."

"I had no idea you had so much spirit," replied the sorcerer. "I thought you were a timid, useless lad, and I cannot describe how much pleased I am to find I was mistaken. Now I begin to think I may have found an assistant and successor in my difficult business. A concertina? You shall have the best in Honolulu. And to-night, as soon as it is dark, you and I will go and find the money."

"Shall we return to the beach?" asked Keola.

"No, no!" replied Kalamake; "you must begin to learn more of my secrets. Last time I taught you to pick shells; this time I shall teach you to catch fish. Are you strong enough to launch Pili's boat?"

"I think I am," returned Keola. "But why should we not take your own, which is afloat already?"

"I have a reason which you will understand thoroughly before to-morrow," said Kalamake. "Pili's boat is the better suited for my purpose. So, if you please, let us meet there as soon as it is dark; and in the meanwhile, let us keep our own counsel, for there is no cause to let the family into our business."

Honey is not more sweet than was the voice of Kalamake, and Keola could scarce contain his satisfaction.

"I might have had my concertina weeks ago,"

thought he, "and there is nothing needed in this world but a little courage."

Presently after he spied Lehua weeping, and was half in a mind to tell her all was well.

"But no," thinks he; "I shall wait till I can show her the concertina; we shall see what the chit will do then. Perhaps she will understand in the future that her husband is a man of some intelligence."

As soon as it was dark father and son-in-law launched Pili's boat and set the sail. There was a great sea, and it blew strong from the leeward; but the boat was swift and light and dry, and skimmed the waves. The wizard had a lantern, which he lit and held with his finger through the ring; and the two sat in the stern and smoked cigars, of which Kalamake had always a provision, and spoke like friends of magic and the great sums of money which they could make by its exercise, and what they should buy first, and what second; and Kalamake talked like a father.

Presently he looked all about, and above him at the stars, and back at the island, which was already three parts sunk under the sea, and he seemed to consider ripely his position.

"Look!" says he, "there is Molokai already far behind us, and Maui like a cloud; and by the bearing of these three stars I know I am come where I desire. This part of the sea is called the Sea of the Dead. It is in this place extraordinarily deep, and the floor is all covered with

the bones of men, and in the holes of this part gods and goblins keep their habitation. The flow of the sea is to the north, stronger than a shark can swim, and any man who shall here be thrown out of a ship it bears away like a wild horse into the uttermost ocean. Presently he is spent and goes down, and his bones are scattered with the rest, and the gods devour his spirit."

Fear came on Keola at the words, and he looked, and by the light of the stars and the lantern, the warlock seemed to change.

"What ails you?" cried Keola, quick and sharp.

"It is not I who am ailing," said the wizard; "but there is one here very sick."

With that he changed his grasp upon the lantern, and, behold—as he drew his finger from the ring, the finger stuck and the ring was burst, and his hand was grown to be of the bigness of three.

At that sight Keola screamed and covered his face.

But Kalamake held up the lantern. "Look rather at my face!" said he—and his head was huge as a barrel; and still he grew and grew as a cloud grows on a mountain, and Keola sat before him screaming, and the boat raced on the great seas.

"And now," said the wizard, "what do you think about that concertina? and are you sure you would not rather have a flute? No?" says

he; "that is well, for I do not like my family to be changeable of purpose. But I begin to think I had better get out of this paltry boat, for my bulk swells to a very unusual degree, and if we are not the more careful, she will presently be swamped."

With that he threw his legs over the side. Even as he did so, the greatness of the man grew thirty-fold and forty-fold as swift as sight or thinking, so that he stood in the deep seas to the armpits, and his head and shoulders rose like a high isle, and the swell beat and burst upon his bosom, as it beats and breaks against a cliff. The boat ran still to the north, but he reached out his hand, and took the gunwale by the finger and thumb, and broke the side like a biscuit, and Keola was spilled into the sea. And the pieces of the boat the sorcerer crushed in the hollow of his hand and flung miles away into the night.

"Excuse me taking the lantern," said he; "for I have a long wade before me, and the land is far, and the bottom of the sea uneven, and I feel the bones under my toes."

And he turned and went off walking with great strides; and as often as Keola sank in the trough he could see him no longer; but as often as he was heaved upon the crest, there he was striding and dwindling, and he held the lamp high over his head, and the waves broke white about him as he went.

Since first the islands were fished out of the sea, there was never a man so terrified as this Keola. He swam indeed, but he swam as puppies swim when they are cast in to drown, and knew not wherefore. He could but think of the hugeness of the swelling of the warlock, of that face which was great as a mountain, of those shoulders that were broad as an isle, and of the seas that beat on them in vain. He thought, too, of the concertina, and shame took hold upon him; and of the dead men's bones, and fear shook him.

Of a sudden he was aware of something dark against the stars that tossed, and a light below, and a brightness of the cloven sea; and he heard speech of men. He cried out aloud and a voice answered; and in a twinkling the bows of a ship hung above him on a wave like a thing balanced, and swooped down. He caught with his two hands in the chains of her, and the next moment was buried in the rushing seas, and the next hauled on board by seamen.

They gave him gin and biscuit and dry clothes, and asked him how he came where they found him, and whether the light which they had seen was the lighthouse, Lae o Ka Laau. But Keola knew white men are like children and only believe their own stories; so about himself he told them what he pleased, and as for the light (which was Kalamake's lantern) he vowed he had seen none.

This ship was a schooner bound for Honolulu, and then to trade in the low islands; and by a very good chance for Keola she had lost a man off the bowsprit in a squall. It was no use talking. Keola durst not stay in the Eight Islands. Word goes so quickly, and all men are so fond to talk and carry news, that if he hid in the north end of Kauai or in the south end of Kaü, the wizard would have wind of it before a month, and he must perish. So he did what seemed the most prudent, and shipped sailor in the place of the man who had been drowned.

In some ways the ship was a good place. The food was extraordinarily rich and plenty, with biscuits and salt beef every day, and pea-soup and puddings made of flour and suet twice a week, so that Keola grew fat. The captain also was a good man, and the crew no worse than other whites. The trouble was the mate, who was the most difficult man to please Keola had ever met with, and beat and cursed him daily, both for what he did and what he did not. The blows that he dealt were very sure, for he was strong; and the words he used were very unpalatable, for Keola was come of a good family and accustomed to respect. And what was the worst of all, whenever Keola found a chance to sleep, there was the mate awake and stirring him up with a rope's end. Keola saw it would never do; and he made up his mind to run away.

They were about a month out from Honolulu

when they made the land. It was a fine starry night, the sea was smooth as well as the sky fair; it blew a steady trade; and there was the island on their weather bow, a ribbon of palm-trees lying flat along the sea. The captain and the mate looked at it with the night glass, and named the name of it, and talked of it, beside the wheel where Keola was steering. It seemed it was an isle where no traders came. By the captain's way, it was an isle besides where no man dwelt; but the mate thought otherwise.

"I don't give a cent for the directory," said he. "I've been past here one night in the schooner *Eugenie:* it was just such a night as this; they were fishing with torches, and the beach was thick with lights like a town."

"Well, well," says the captain, "its steep-to, that's the great point; and there ain't any outlying dangers by the chart, so we'll just hug the lee side of it. Keep her ramping full, don't I tell you!" he cried to Keola, who was listening so hard that he forgot to steer.

And the mate cursed him, and swore that Kanaka was for no use in the world, and if he got started after him with a belaying-pin, it would be a cold day for Keola.

And so the captain and mate lay down on the house together, and Keola was left to himself.

"This island will do very well for me," he thought; "if no traders deal there, the mate will

never come. And as for Kalamake, it is not possible he can ever get as far as this."

With that he kept edging the schooner nearer in. He had to do this quietly, for it was the trouble with these white men, and above all with the mate, that you could never be sure of them; they would all be sleeping sound, or else pretending, and if a sail shook, they would jump to their feet and fall on you with a rope's end. So Keola edged her up little by little, and kept all drawing. And presently the land was close on board, and the sound of the sea on the sides of it grew loud.

With that, the mate sat up suddenly upon the house.

"What are you doing?" he roars. "You'll have the ship ashore!"

And he made one bound for Keola, and Keola made another clean over the rail and plump into the starry sea. When he came up again, the schooner had payed off on her true course, and the mate stood by the wheel himself, and Keola heard him cursing. The sea was smooth under the lee of the island; it was warm besides, and Keola had his sailor's knife, so he had no fear of sharks. A little way before him the trees stopped; there was a break in the line of the land like the mouth of a harbour; and the tide, which was then flowing, took him up and carried him through. One minute he was without, and the next within, had floated there in a wide shallow

water, bright with ten thousand stars, and all about him was the ring of the land with its string of palm-trees. And he was amazed, because this was a kind of island he had never heard of.

The time of Keola in that place was in two periods—the period when he was alone, and the period when he was there with the tribe. At first he sought everywhere and found no man; only some houses standing in a hamlet, and the marks of fires. But the ashes of the fires were cold and the rains had washed them away; and the winds had blown, and some of the huts were overthrown. It was here he took his dwelling; and he made a fire drill, and a shell hook, and fished and cooked his fish, and climbed after green cocoa-nuts, the juice of which he drank, for in all the isle there was no water. The days were long to him, and the nights terrifying. He made a lamp of cocoa-shell, and drew the oil of the ripe nuts, and made a wick of fibre; and when evening came he closed up his hut, and lit his lamp, and lay and trembled till morning. Many a time he thought in his heart he would have been better in the bottom of the sea, his bones rolling there with the others.

All this while he kept by the inside of the island, for the huts were on the shore of the lagoon, and it was there the palms grew best, and the lagoon itself abounded with good fish. And to the outer side he went once only, and

he looked but once at the beach of the ocean, and came away shaking. For the look of it, with its bright sand, and strewn shells, and strong sun and surf, went sore against his inclination.

"It cannot be," he thought, "and yet it is very like. And how do I know? These white men, although they pretend to know where they are sailing, must take their chance like other people. So that after all we may have sailed in a circle, and I may be quite near to Molokai, and this may be the very beach where my father-in-law gathers his dollars."

So after that he was prudent, and kept to the land side.

It was perhaps a month later, when the people of the place arrived—the fill of six great boats. They were a fine race of men, and spoke a tongue that sounded very different from the tongue of Hawaii, but so many of the words were the same that it was not difficult to understand. The men besides were very courteous, and the women very towardly; and they made Keola welcome, and built him a house, and gave him a wife; and what surprised him the most, he was never sent to work with the young men.

And now Keola had three periods. First he had a period of being very sad, and then he had a period when he was pretty merry. Last of all came the third, when he was the most terrified man in the four oceans.

The cause of the first period was the girl he had to wife. He was in doubt about the island, and he might have been in doubt about the speech, of which he had heard so little when he came there with the wizard on the mat. But about his wife there was no mistake conceivable, for she was the same girl that ran from him crying in the wood. So he had sailed all this way, and might as well have stayed in Molokai; and had left home and wife and all his friends for no other cause but to escape his enemy, and the place he had come to was that wizard's hunting ground, and the place where he walked invisible. It was at this period when he kept the most close to the lagoon side, and as far as he dared, abode in the cover of his hut.

The cause of the second period was talk he heard from his wife and the chief islanders. Keola himself said little. He was never so sure of his new friends, for he judged they were too civil to be wholesome, and since he had grown better acquainted with his father-in-law the man had grown more cautious. So he told them nothing of himself, but only his name and descent, and that he came from the Eight Islands, and what fine islands they were; and about the king's palace in Honolulu, and how he was a chief friend of the king and the missionaries. But he put many questions and learned much. The island where he was was called the Isle of Voices; it belonged to the tribe, but they made

their home upon another, three hours' sail to the southward. There they lived and had their permanent houses, and it was a rich island, where were eggs and chickens and pigs, and ships came trading with rum and tobacco. It was there the schooner had gone after Keola deserted; there, too, the mate had died, like the fool of a white man as he was. It seems, when the ship came, it was the beginning of the sickly season in that isle, when the fish of the lagoon are poisonous, and all who eat of them swell up and die. The mate was told of it; he saw the boats preparing, because in that season the people leave that island and sail to the Isle of Voices; but he was a fool of a white man, who would believe no stories but his own, and he caught one of these fish, cooked it and ate it, and swelled up and died, which was good news to Keola. As for the Isle of Voices, it lay solitary the most part of the year, only now and then a boat's crew came for copra, and in the bad season, when the fish at the main isle were poisonous, the tribe dwelt there in a body. It had its name from a marvel, for it seemed the sea-side of it was all beset with invisible devils; day and night you heard them talking with one another in strange tongues; day and night little fires blazed up and were extinguished on the beach; and what was the cause of these doings no man might conceive. Keola asked them if it were the same in their own island where they stayed, and they told

him no, not there; nor yet in any other of some hundred isles that lay all about them in that sea; but it was a thing peculiar to the Isle of Voices. They told him also that these fires and voices were ever on the sea-side and in the seaward fringes of the wood, and a man might dwell by the lagoon two thousand years (if he could live so long) and never be any way troubled; and even on the sea-side the devils did no harm if let alone. Only once a chief had cast a spear at one of the voices, and the same night he fell out of a cocoanut-palm and was killed.

Keola thought a good bit with himself. He saw he would be all right when the tribe returned to the main island, and right enough where he was, if he kept by the lagoon, yet he had a mind to make things righter if he could. So he told the high chief he had once been in an isle that was pestered the same way, and the folk had found a means to cure that trouble.

"There was a tree growing in the bush there," says he, "and it seems these devils came to get the leaves of it. So the people of the isle cut down the tree wherever it was found, and the devils came no more."

They asked what kind of a tree this was, and he showed them the tree of which Kalamake burned the leaves. They found it hard to believe, yet the idea tickled them. Night after night the old men debated it in their councils, but the high chief (though he was a brave man)

was afraid of the matter, and reminded them daily of the chief who cast a spear against the voices and was killed, and the thought of that brought all to a stand again.

Though he could not yet bring about the destruction of the trees, Keola was well enough pleased, and began to look about him and take pleasure in his days; and, among other things, he was the kinder to his wife, so that the girl began to love him greatly. One day he came to the hut, and she lay on the ground lamenting.

"Why," said Keola, "what is wrong with you now?"

She declared it was nothing.

The same night she woke him. The lamp burned very low, but he saw by her face she was in sorrow.

"Keola," she said, "put your ear to my mouth that I may whisper, for no one must hear us. Two days before the boats begin to be got ready, go you to the sea-side of the isle and lie in a thicket. We shall choose that place beforehand, you and I; and hide food; and every night I shall come near by there singing. So when a night comes and you do not hear me, you shall know we are clean gone out of the island, and you may come forth again in safety."

The soul of Keola died within him.

"What is this?" he cried. "I cannot live among devils. I will not be left behind upon this isle. I am dying to leave it."

"You will never leave it alive, my poor Keola," said the girl; "for to tell you the truth, my people are eaters of men; but this they keep secret. And the reason they will kill you before we leave is because in our island ships come, and Donat-Kimaran comes and talks for the French, and there is a white trader there in a house with a verandah, and a catechist. Oh, that is a fine place indeed! The trader has barrels filled with flour; and a French warship once came in the lagoon and gave everybody wine and biscuit. Ah, my poor Keola, I wish I could take you there, for great is my love to you, and it is the finest place in the seas except Papeete."

So now Keola was the most terrified man in the four oceans. He had heard tell of eaters of men in the south islands, and the thing had always been a fear to him; and here it was knocking at his door. He had heard besides, by travellers, of their practices, and how when they are in a mind to eat a man, they cherish and fondle him like a mother with a favourite baby. And he saw this must be his own case; and that was why he had been housed, and fed, and wived, and liberated from all work; and why the old men and the chiefs discoursed with him like a person of weight. So he lay on his bed and railed upon his destiny; and the flesh curdled on his bones.

The next day the people of the tribe were very civil, as their way was. They were elegant

speakers, and they made beautiful poetry, and jested at meals, so that a missionary must have died laughing. It was little enough Keola cared for their fine ways; all he saw was the white teeth shining in their mouths, and his gorge rose at the sight; and when they were done eating, he went and lay in the bush like a dead man.

The next day it was the same, and then his wife followed him.

"Keola," she said, "if you do not eat, I tell you plainly you will be killed and cooked to-morrow. Some of the old chiefs are murmuring already. They think you are fallen sick and must lose flesh."

With that Keola got to his feet, and anger burned in him.

"It is little I care one way or the other," said he. "I am between the devil and the deep sea. Since die I must, let me die the quickest way; and since I must be eaten at the best of it, let me rather be eaten by hobgoblins than by men. Farewell," said he, and he left her standing, and walked to the sea-side of that island.

It was all bare in the strong sun; there was no sign of man, only the beach was trodden, and all about him as he went, the voices talked and whispered, and the little fires sprang up and burned down. All tongues of the earth were spoken there: the French, the Dutch, the Russian, the Tamil, the Chinese. Whatever land knew sorcery, there were some of its people whis-

pering in Keola's ear. That beach was thick as a cried fair, yet no man seen; and as he walked he saw the shells vanish before him, and no man to pick them up. I think the devil would have been afraid to be alone in such a company; but Keola was past fear and courted death. When the fires sprang up, he charged for them like a bull. Bodiless voices called to and fro; unseen hands poured sand upon the flames; and they were gone from the beach before he reached them.

"It is plain Kalamake is not here," he thought, "as I must have been killed long since."

With that he sat him down in the margin of the wood, for he was tired, and put his chin upon his hands. The business before his eyes continued; the beach babbled with voices, and the fires sprang up and sank, and the shells vanished and were renewed again even while he looked.

"It was a by-day when I was here before," he thought, "for it was nothing to this."

And his head was dizzy with the thought of these millions and millions of dollars, and all these hundreds and hundreds of persons culling them upon the beach and flying in the air higher and swifter than eagles.

"And to think how they have fooled me with their talk of mints," says he, "and that money was made there, when it is clear that all the new coin in all the world is gathered on these sands! But I will know better the next time!" said he.

And at last, he knew not very well how or when, sleep fell on Keola, and he forgot the island and all his sorrows.

Early the next day, before the sun was yet up, a bustle woke him. He awoke in fear, for he thought the tribe had caught him napping; but it was no such matter. Only, on the beach in front of him, the bodiless voices called and shouted one upon another, and it seemed they all passed and swept beside him up the coast of the island.

"What is afoot now?" thinks Keola. And it was plain to him it was something beyond ordinary, for the fires were not lighted nor the shells taken, but the bodiless voices kept posting up the beach, and hailing and dying away; and others following, and by the sound of them these wizards should be angry.

"It is not me they are angry at," thought Keola, "for they pass me close."

As when hounds go by, or horses in a race, or city folk coursing to a fire, and all men join and follow after, so it was now with Keola; and he knew not what he did, nor why he did it, but there, lo and behold! he was running with the voices.

So he turned one point of the island, and this brought him in view of a second; and there he remembered the wizard trees to have been growing by the score together in a wood. From this point there went up a hubbub of men crying not

to be described; and by the sound of them, those that he ran with shaped their course for the same quarter. A little nearer, and there began to mingle with the outcry the crash of many axes. And at this a thought came at last into his mind that the high chief had consented; that the men of the tribe had set to cutting down these trees; that word had gone about the isle from sorcerer to sorcerer, and these were all now assembling to defend their trees. Desire of strange things swept him on. He posted with the voices, crossed the beach, and came into the borders of the wood, and stood astonished. One tree had fallen, others were part hewed away. There was the tribe clustered. They were back to back, and bodies lay, and blood flowed among their feet. The hue of fear was on all their faces; their voices went up to heaven shrill as a weasel's cry.

Have you seen a child when he is all alone and has a wooden sword, and fights, leaping and hewing with the empty air? Even so the man-eaters huddled back to back and heaved up their axes, and laid on, and screamed as they laid on, and behold! no man to contend with them! only here and there Keola saw an axe swinging over against them without hands; and time and again a man of the tribe would fall before it, clove in twain or burst asunder, and his soul sped howling.

For a while Keola looked upon this prodigy like one that dreams, and then fear took him by the

midst as sharp as death, that he should behold such doings. Even in that same flash the high chief of the clan espied him standing, and pointed and called out his name. Thereat the whole tribe saw him also, and their eyes flashed, and their teeth clashed.

"I am too long here," thought Keola, and ran farther out of the wood and down the beach, not caring whither.

"Keola!" said a voice close by upon the empty sand.

"Lehua! is that you!" he cried, and gasped, and looked in vain for her; but by the eyesight he was stark alone.

"I saw you pass before," the voice answered; "but you would not hear me. Quick! get the leaves and the herbs, and let us flee."

"You are there with the mat?" he asked.

"Here, at your side," said she. And he felt her arms about him. "Quick! the leaves and the herbs, before my father can get back!"

So Keola ran for his life, and fetched the wizard fuel; and Lehua guided him back, and set his feet upon the mat, and made the fire. All the time of its burning, the sound of the battle towered out of the wood; the wizards and the man-eaters hard at fight; the wizards, the viewless ones, roaring out aloud like bulls upon a mountain, and the men of the tribe replying shrill and savage out of the terror of their souls. And all the time of the burning, Keola stood

there and listened, and shook, and watched how the unseen hands of Lehua poured the leaves. She poured them fast, and the flame burned high, and scorched Keola's hands; and she speeded and blew the burning with her breath. The last leaf was eaten, the flame fell, and the shock followed, and there were Keola and Lehua in the room at home.

Now, when Keola could see his wife at last he was mighty pleased, and he was mighty pleased to be home again in Molokai and sit down beside a bowl of poi—for they make no poi on board ships, and there was none in the Isle of Voices—and he was out of the body with pleasure to be clean escaped out of the hands of the eaters of men. But there was another matter not so clear, and Lehua and Keola talked of it all night and were troubled. There was Kalamake left upon the isle. If, by the blessing of God, he could but stick there, all were well; but should he escape and return to Molokai, it would be an ill day for his daughter and her husband. They spoke of his gift of swelling and whether he could wade that distance in the seas. But Keola knew by this time where that island was—and that is to say, in the Low or Dangerous Archipelago. So they fetched the atlas and looked upon the distance in the map, and by what they could make of it, it seemed a far way for an old gentleman to walk. Still, it would not do to make too sure of a warlock like Kalamake, and

they determined at last to take counsel of a white missionary.

So the first one that came by Keola told him everything. And the missionary was very sharp on him for taking the second wife in the low island; but for all the rest, he vowed he could make neither head nor tail of it.

"However," says he, "if you think this money of your father's ill-gotten, my advice to you would be to give some of it to the lepers and some to the missionary fund. And as for this extraordinary rigmarole, you cannot do better than keep it to yourselves."

But he warned the police at Honolulu that, by all he could make out, Kalamake and Keola had been coining false money, and it would not be amiss to watch them.

Keola and Lehua took his advice, and gave many dollars to the lepers and the fund. And no doubt the advice must have been good, for from that day to this, Kalamake has never more been heard of. But whether he was slain in the battle by the trees, or whether he is still kicking his heels upon the Isle of Voices, who shall say?

FATHER DAMIEN

FATHER DAMIEN

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE REVEREND DR. HYDE OF HONOLULU

Sydney, February 25, 1890.

SIR,—It may probably occur to you that we have met, and visited, and conversed; on my side, with interest. You may remember that you have done me several courtesies, for which I was prepared to be grateful. But there are duties which come before gratitude, and offences which justly divide friends, far more acquaintances. Your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage is a document which, in my sight, if you had filled me with bread when I was starving, if you had sat up to nurse my father when he lay a-dying, would yet absolve me from the bonds of gratitude. You know enough, doubtless, of the process of canonisation to be aware that, a hundred years after the death of Damien, there will appear a man charged with the painful office of the *devil's advocate*. After that noble brother of mine, and of all frail clay, shall have lain a century at rest, one shall accuse, one defend him.

The circumstance is unusual that the devil's advocate should be a volunteer, should be a member of a sect immediately rival, and should make haste to take upon himself his ugly office ere the bones are cold; unusual and of a taste which I shall leave my readers free to qualify; unusual, and to me inspiring. If I have at all learned the trade of using words to convey truth and to arouse emotion, you have at last furnished me with a subject. For it is in the interest of all mankind and the cause of public decency in every quarter of the world, not only that Damien should be righted, but that you and your letter should be displayed at length, in their true colours, to the public eye.

To do this properly, I must begin by quoting you at large: I shall then proceed to criticise your utterance from several points of view, divine and human, in the course of which I shall attempt to draw again and with more specification the character of the dead saint whom it has pleased you to vilify: so much being done, I shall say farewell to you for ever.

"*Honolulu, August 2, 1889.*

"Rev. H. B. Gage.

"Dear Brother,—In answer to your inquiries about Father Damien, I can only reply that we who knew the man are surprised at the extravagant newspaper laudations, as if he was a most

saintly philanthropist. The simple truth is, he was a coarse, dirty man, headstrong and bigoted. He was not sent to Molokai, but went there without orders; did not stay at the leper settlement (before he became one himself), but circulated freely over the whole island (less than half the island is devoted to the lepers), and he came often to Honolulu. He had no hand in the reforms and improvements inaugurated, which were the work of our Board of Health, as occasion required and means were provided. He was not a pure man in his relations with women, and the leprosy of which he died should be attributed to his vices and carelessness. Others have done much for the lepers, our own ministers, the government physicians, and so forth, but never with the Catholic idea of meriting eternal life. —Yours, etc.,

"C. M. Hyde."[1]

To deal fitly with a letter so extraordinary, I must draw at the outset on my private knowledge of the signatory and his sect. It may offend others; scarcely you, who have been so busy to collect, so bold to publish, gossip on your rivals. And this is perhaps the moment when I may best explain to you the character of what you are to read: I conceive you as a man quite beyond and below the reticences of civility: with what measure you mete, with that shall it be measured you again; with you, at last I rejoice to feel the but-

[1]From the Sydney *Presbyterian*, October 26, 1889.

ton off the foil and to plunge home. And if in aught that I shall say I should offend others, your colleagues, whom I respect and remember with affection, I can but offer them my regret; I am not free, I am inspired by the consideration of interests far more large; and such pain as can be inflicted by anything from me must be indeed trifling when compared with the pain with which they read your letter. It is not the hangman, but the criminal, that brings dishonour on the house.

You belong, sir, to a sect—I believe my sect, and that in which my ancestors laboured—which has enjoyed, and partly failed to utilise, an exceptional advantage in the islands of Hawaii. The first missionaries came; they found the land already self-purged of its old and bloody faith; they were embraced, almost on their arrival, with enthusiasm; what troubles they supported came far more from whites than from Hawaiians; and to these last they stood (in a rough figure) in the shoes of God. This is not the place to enter into the degree or causes of their failure, such as it is. One element alone is pertinent, and must here be plainly dealt with. In the course of their evangelical calling, they—or too many of them—grew rich. It may be news to you that the houses of missionaries are a cause of mocking on the streets of Honolulu. It will at least be news to you, that when I returned your civil visit, the driver of my cab commented on

the size, the taste, and the comfort of your home. It would have been news certainly to myself, had any one told me that afternoon that I should live to drag such matter into print. But you see, sir, how you degrade better men to your own level; and it is needful that those who are to judge betwixt you and me, betwixt Damien and the devil's advocate, should understand your letter to have been penned in a house which could raise, and that very justly, the envy and the comments of the passers-by. I think (to employ a phrase of yours which I admire) it "should be attributed" to you that you have never visited the scene of Damien's life and death. If you had, and had recalled it, and looked about your pleasant rooms, even your pen perhaps would have been stayed.

Your sect (and remember, as far as any sect avows me, it is mine) has not done ill in a worldly sense in the Hawaiian Kingdom. When calamity befell their innocent parishioners, when leprosy descended and took root in the Eight Islands, a *quid pro quo* was to be looked for. To that prosperous mission, and to you, as one of its adornments, God had sent at last an opportunity. I know I am touching here upon a nerve acutely sensitive. I know that others of your colleagues look back on the inertia of your Church, and the intrusive and decisive heroism of Damien, with something almost to be called remorse. I am sure it is so with yourself; I am

persuaded your letter was inspired by a certain envy, not essentially ignoble, and the one human trait to be espied in that performance. You were thinking of the lost chance, the past day; of that which should have been conceived and was not; of the service due and not rendered. *Time was*, said the voice in your ear, in your pleasant room, as you sat raging and writing; and if the words written were base beyond parallel, the rage, I am happy to repeat—it is the only compliment I shall pay you—the rage was almost virtuous. But, sir, when we have failed, and another has succeeded; when we have stood by, and another has stepped in; when we sit and grow bulky in our charming mansions, and a plain, uncouth peasant steps into the battle, under the eyes of God, and succours the afflicted, and consoles the dying, and is himself afflicted in his turn, and dies upon the field of honour—the battle cannot be retrieved as your unhappy irritation has suggested. It is a lost battle, and lost for ever. One thing remained to you in your defeat—some rags of common honour; and these you have made haste to cast away.

Common honour; not the honour of having done anything right, but the honour of not having done aught conspicuously foul; the honour of the inert: that was what remained to you. We are not all expected to be Damiens; a man may conceive his duty more narrowly, he may love his comforts better; and none will cast a stone at

him for that. But will a gentleman of your reverend profession allow me an example from the fields of gallantry? When two gentlemen compete for the favour of a lady, and the one succeeds and the other is rejected, and (as will sometimes happen) matter damaging to the successful rival's credit reaches the ear of the defeated, it is held by plain men of no pretensions that his mouth is, in the circumstance, almost necessarily closed. Your Church and Damien's were in Hawaii upon a rivalry to do well: to help, to edify, to set divine examples. You having (in one huge instance) failed, and Damien succeeded, I marvel it should not have occurred to you that you were doomed to silence; that when you had been outstripped in that high rivalry, and sat inglorious in the midst of your well-being, in your pleasant room—and Damien, crowned with glories and horrors, toiled and rotted in that pigstye of his under the cliffs of Kalawao—you, the elect who would not, were the last man on earth to collect and propagate gossip on the volunteer who would and did.

I think I see you—for I try to see you in the flesh as I write these sentences—I think I see you leap at the word pigstye, a hyperbolical expression at the best. "He had no hand in the reforms," he was "a coarse, dirty man"; these were your own words; and you may think it possible that I am come to support you with fresh evidence. In a sense, it is even so. Da-

mien has been too much depicted with a conventional halo and conventional features; so drawn by men who perhaps had not the eye to remark or the pen to express the individual; or who perhaps were only blinded and silenced by generous admiration, such as I partly envy for myself—such as you, if your soul were enlightened, would envy on your bended knees. It is the least defect of such a method of portraiture that it makes the path easy for the devil's advocate, and leaves for the misuse of the slanderer a considerable field of truth. For the truth that is suppressed by friends is the readiest weapon of the enemy. The world, in your despite, may perhaps owe you something, if your letter be the means of substituting once for all a credible likeness for a wax abstraction. For, if that world at all remember you, on the day when Damien of Molokai shall be named Saint, it will be in virtue of one work: your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage.

You may ask on what authority I speak. It was my inclement destiny to become acquainted, not with Damien, but with Dr. Hyde. When I visited the lazaretto Damien was already in his resting grave. But such information as I have, I gathered on the spot in conversation with those who knew him well and long: some indeed who revered his memory; but others who had sparred and wrangled with him, who beheld him with no halo, who perhaps regarded him with small re-

spect, and through whose unprepared and scarcely partial communications the plain, human features of the man shone on me convincingly. These gave me what knowledge I possess; and I learnt it in that scene where it could be most completely and sensitively understood—Kalawao, which you have never visited, about which you have never so much as endeavoured to inform yourself: for, brief as your letter is, you have found the means to stumble into that confession. "*Less then one-half* of the island," you say, "is devoted to the lepers." Molokai—"*Molokai ahina*," the "grey," lofty, and most desolate island—along all its northern side plunges a front of precipice into a sea of unusual profundity. This range of cliff is, from east to west, the true end and frontier of the island. Only in one spot there projects into the ocean a certain triangular and rugged down, grassy, stony, windy, and rising in the midst into a hill with a dead crater: the whole bearing to the cliff that overhangs it somewhat the same relation as a bracket to a wall. With this hint you will now be able to pick out the leper station on a map; you will be able to judge how much of Molokai is thus cut off between the surf and precipice, whether less than a half, or less than a quarter, or a fifth, or a tenth—or say, a twentieth; and the next time you burst into print you will be in a position to share with us the issue of your calculations.

I imagine you to be one of those persons who talk with cheerfulness of that place which oxen and wainropes could not drag you to behold. You, who do not even know its situation on the map, probably denounce sensational descriptions, stretching your limbs the while in your pleasant parlour on Beretania Street. When I was pulled ashore there one early morning, there sat with me in the boat two sisters, bidding farewell (in humble imitation of Damien) to the lights and joys of human life. One of these wept silently; I could not withhold myself from joining her. Had you been there, it is my belief that nature would have triumphed even in you; and as the boat drew but a little nearer, and you beheld the stairs crowded with abominable deformations of our common manhood, and saw yourself landing in the midst of such a population as only now and then surrounds us in the horror of a nightmare—what a haggard eye you would have rolled over your reluctant shoulder towards the house on Beretania Street! Had you gone on; had you found every fourth face a blot upon the landscape; had you visited the hospital and seen the butt-ends of human beings lying there almost unrecognisable, but still breathing, still thinking, still remembering; you would have understood that life in the lazaretto is an ordeal from which the nerves of a man's spirit shrink, even as his eye quails under the brightness of the sun; you would have felt it was (even to-day)

a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in. It is not the fear of possible infection. That seems a little thing when compared with the pain, the pity, and the disgust of the visitor's surroundings, and the atmosphere of affliction, disease, and physical disgrace in which he breathes. I do not think I am a man more than usually timid; but I never recall the days and nights I spent upon that island promontory (eight days and seven nights), without heartfelt thankfulness that I am somewhere else. I find in my diary that I speak of my stay as a "grinding experience": I have once jotted in the margin, "*Harrowing* is the word"; and when the *Mokolii* bore me at last towards the outer world, I kept repeating to myself, with a new conception of their pregnancy, those simple words of the song—

"'Tis the most distressful country that ever yet was seen."

And observe: that which I saw and suffered from was a settlement purged, bettered, beautified; the new village built, the hospital and the Bishop-Home excellently arranged; the sisters, the doctor, and the missionaries, all indefatigable in their noble tasks. It was a different place when Damien came there, and made his great renunciation, and slept that first night under a tree amidst his rotting brethren: alone with pestilence; and looking forward (with what courage, with what pitiful sinkings of dread, God only knows) to a lifetime of dressing sores and stumps.

You will say, perhaps, I am too sensitive, that sights as painful abound in cancer hospitals and are confronted daily by doctors and nurses. I have long learned to admire and envy the doctors and the nurses. But there is no cancer hospital so large and populous as Kalawao and Kalaupapá; and in such a matter every fresh case, like every inch of length in the pipe of an organ, deepens the note of the impression; for what daunts the onlooker is that monstrous sum of human suffering by which he stands surrounded. Lastly, no doctor or nurse is called upon to enter once for all the doors of that gehenna; they do not say farewell, they need not abandon hope, on its sad threshold; they but go for a time to their high calling, and can look forward as they go to relief, to recreation, and to rest. But Damien shut to with his own hand the doors of his own sepulchre.

I shall now extract three passages from my diary at Kalawao.

A. "Damien is dead and already somewhat ungratefully remembered in the field of his labours and sufferings. 'He was a good man, but very officious,' says one. Another tells me he had fallen (as other priests so easily do) into something of the ways and habits of thought of a Kanaka; but he had the wit to recognise the fact, and the good sense to laugh at" [over] "it. A plain man it seems he was; I cannot find he was a popular."

B. "After Ragsdale's death" [Ragsdale was a famous Luna, or overseer, of the unruly settlement] "there followed a brief term of office by Father Damien which served only to publish the weakness of that noble man. He was rough in his ways, and he had no control. Authority was relaxed; Damien's life was threatened, and he was soon eager to resign."

C. "Of Damien I begin to have an idea. He seems to have been a man of the peasant class, certainly of the peasant type: shrewd; ignorant and bigoted, yet with an open mind, and capable of receiving and digesting a reproof if it were bluntly administered; superbly generous in the least thing as well as in the greatest, and as ready to give his last shirt (although not without human grumbling) as he had been to sacrifice his life; essentially indiscreet and officious, which made him a troublesome colleague; domineering in all his ways, which made him incurably unpopular with the Kanakas, but yet destitute of real authority, so that his boys laughed at him and he must carry out his wishes by the means of bribes. He learned to have a mania for doctoring; and set up the Kanakas against the remedies of his regular rivals: perhaps (if anything matter at all in the treatment of such a disease) the worst thing that he did and certainly the easiest. The best and worst of the man appear very plainly in his dealings with Mr. Chapman's money; he had originally laid it out" [intended to lay it out]

"entirely for the benefit of Catholics, and even so not wisely; but after a long, plain talk, he admitted his error fully and revised the list. The sad state of the boys' home is in part the result of his lack of control; in part, of his own slovenly ways and false ideas of hygiene. Brother officials used to call it 'Damien's Chinatown.' 'Well,' they would say, 'your Chinatown keeps growing.' And he would laugh with perfect good-nature, and adhere to his errors with perfect obstinacy. So much I have gathered of truth about this plain, noble human brother and father of ours; his imperfections are the traits of his face, by which we know him for our fellow; his martyrdom and his example nothing can lessen or annul; and only a person here on the spot can properly appreciate their greatness."

I have set down these private passages, as you perceive, without correction; thanks to you, the public has them in their bluntness. They are almost a list of the man's faults, for it is rather these that I was seeking: with his virtues, with the heroic profile of his life, I and the world were already sufficiently acquainted. I was besides a little suspicious of Catholic testimony; in no ill sense, but merely because Damien's admirers and disciples were the least likely to be critical. I know you will be more suspicious still; and the facts set down above were one and all collected from the lips of Protestants who had opposed

the father in his life. Yet I am strangely deceived, or they build up the image of a man, with all his weaknesses, essentially heroic and alive with rugged honesty, generosity, and mirth.

Take it for what it is, rough private jottings of the worst sides of Damien's character, collected from the lips of those who had laboured with and (in your own phrase) "knew the man";—though I question whether Damien would have said that he knew you. Take it, and observe with wonder how well you were served by your gossips, how ill by your intelligence and sympathy; in how many points of fact we are at one, and how widely our appreciations vary. There is something wrong here; either with you or me. It is possible, for instance, that you, who seem to have so many ears in Kalawao, had heard of the affair of Mr. Chapman's money, and were singly struck by Damien's intended wrong-doing. I was struck with that also, and set it fairly down; but I was struck much more by the fact that he had the honesty of mind to be convinced. I may here tell you that it was a long business; that one of his colleagues sat with him late into the night, multiplying arguments and accusations; that the father listened as usual with "perfect good-nature and perfect obstinacy;" but at the last, when he was persuaded—"Yes," said he, "I am very much obliged to you; you have done me a service; it would have been a theft." There are

many (not Catholics merely) who require their heroes and saints to be infallible; to these the story will be painful; not to the true lovers, patrons, and servants of mankind.

And I take it, this is a type of our division; that you are one of those who have an eye for faults and failures; that you take a pleasure to find and publish them; and that, having found them, you make haste to forget the overvailing virtues and the real success which had alone introduced them to your knowledge. It is a dangerous frame of mind. That you may understand how dangerous, and into what a situation it has already brought you, we will (if you please) go hand-in-hand through the different phrases of your letter, and candidly examine each from the point of view of its truth, its appositeness, and its charity.

Damien was *coarse.*

It is very possible. You make us sorry for the lepers who had only a coarse old peasant for their friend and father. But you, who were so refined, why were you not there, to cheer them with the lights of culture? Or may I remind you that we have some reason to doubt if John the Baptist were genteel; and in the case of Peter, on whose career you doubtless dwell approvingly in the pulpit, no doubt at all he was a "coarse, headstrong" fisherman! Yet even in our Protestant Bibles Peter is called Saint.

Damien was *dirty.*

He was. Think of the poor lepers annoyed with this dirty comrade! But the clean Dr. Hyde was at his food in a fine house.

Damien was *headstrong.*

I believe you are right again; and I thank God for his strong head and heart.

Damien was *bigoted.*

I am not fond of bigots myself, because they are not fond of me. But what is meant by bigotry, that we should regard it as a blemish in a priest? Damien believed his own religion with the simplicity of a peasant or a child; as I would I could suppose that you do. For this, I wonder at him some way off; and had that been his only character, should have avoided him in life. But the point of interest in Damien, which has caused him to be so much talked about and made him at last the subject of your pen and mine, was that, in him, his bigotry, his intense and narrow faith, wrought potently for good, and strengthened him to be one of the world's heroes and exemplars.

Damien *was not sent to Molokai, but went there without orders.*

Is this a misreading? or do you really mean the words for blame? I have heard Christ, in the pulpits of our Church, held up for imitation on

the ground that His sacrifice was voluntary. Does Dr. Hyde think otherwise?

Damien *did not stay at the settlement, etc.*

It is true he was allowed many indulgences. Am I to understand that you blame the father for profiting by these, or the officers for granting them? In either case, it is a mighty Spartan standard to issue from the house on Beretania Street; and I am convinced you will find yourself with few supporters.

Damien *had no hand in the reforms, etc.*

I think even you will admit that I have already been frank in my description of the man I am defending; but before I take you up upon this head, I will be franker still, and tell you that perhaps nowhere in the world can a man taste a more pleasurable sense of contrast than when he passes from Damien's "Chinatown" at Kalawao to the beautiful Bishop-Home at Kalaupapa. At this point, in my desire to make all fair for you, I will break my rule and adduce Catholic testimony. Here is a passage from my diary about my visit to the Chinatown, from which you will see how it is (even now) regarded by its own officials: "We went round all the dormitories, refectories, etc.—dark and dingy enough, with a superficial cleanliness, which he" [Mr. Dutton, the lay brother] "did not seek to defend. 'It is almost decent,' said he; 'the sisters will make

that all right when we get them here.'" And yet I gathered it was already better since Damien was dead, and far better than when he was there alone and had his own (not always excellent) way. I have now come far enough to meet you on a common ground of fact; and I tell you that, to a mind not prejudiced by jealousy, all the reforms of the lazaretto, and even those which he most vigorously opposed, are properly the work of Damien. They are the evidence of his success; they are what his heroism provoked from the reluctant and the careless. Many were before him in the field; Mr. Meyer, for instance, of whose faithful work we hear too little: there have been many since; and some had more worldly wisdom, though none had more devotion, than our saint. Before his day, even you will confess, they had effected little. It was his part, by one striking act of martyrdom, to direct all men's eyes on that distressful country. At a blow, and with the price of his life, he made the place illustrious and public. And that, if you will consider largely, was the one reform needful; pregnant of all that should succeed. It brought money; it brought (best individual addition of them all) the sisters; it brought supervision, for public opinion and public interest landed with the man at Kalawao. If ever any man brought reforms, and died to bring them, it was he. There is not a clean cup or towel in the Bishop-Home, but dirty Damien washed it.

Damien *was not a pure man in his relations with women, etc.*

How do you know that? Is this the nature of the conversation in that house on Beretania Street which the cabman envied, driving past?—racy details of the misconduct of the poor peasant priest, toiling under the cliffs of Molokai?

Many have visited the station before me; they seem not to have heard the rumour. When I was there I heard many shocking tales, for my informants were men speaking with the plainness of the laity; and I heard plenty of complaints of Damien. Why was this never mentioned? and how came it to you in the retirement of your clerical parlour?

But I must not even seem to deceive you. This scandal, when I read it in your letter, was not new to me. I had heard it once before; and I must tell you how. There came to Samoa a man from Honolulu; he, in a public-house on the beach, volunteered the statement that Damien had "contracted the disease from having connection with the female lepers"; and I find a joy in telling you how the report was welcomed in a public-house. A man sprang to his feet; I am not at liberty to give his name, but from what I heard I doubt if you would care to have him to dinner in Beretania Street. "You miserable little ——" (here is a word I dare not print, it would so shock your ears). "You miserable little ——," he cried, "if the story were a thou-

sand times true, can't you see you are a million times a lower —— for daring to repeat it?" I wish it could be told of you that when the report reached you in your house, perhaps after family worship, you had found in your soul enough holy anger to receive it with the same expressions: ay, even with that one which I dare not print; it would not need to have been blotted away, like Uncle Toby's oath, by the tears of the recording angel; it would have been counted to you for your brightest righteousness. But you have deliberately chosen the part of the man from Honolulu, and you have played it with improvements of your own. The man from Honolulu—miserable, leering creature—communicated the tale to a rude knot of beach-combing drinkers in a public-house, where (I will so far agree with your temperance opinions) man is not always at his noblest; and the man from Honolulu had himself been drinking—drinking, we may charitably fancy, to excess. It was to your "Dear Brother, the Reverend H. B. Gage," that you chose to communicate the sickening story; and the blue ribbon which adorns your portly bosom forbids me to allow you the extenuating plea that you were drunk when it was done. Your "dear brother"—a brother indeed—made haste to deliver up your letter (as a means of grace, perhaps) to the religious papers; where, after many months, I found and read and wondered at it; and whence I have now reproduced it for the

wonder of others. And you and your dear brother have, by this cycle of operations, built up a contrast very edifying to examine in detail. The man whom you would not care to have to dinner, on the one side; on the other, the Reverend Dr. Hyde and the Reverend H. B. Gage: the Apia bar-room, the Honolulu manse.

But I fear you scarce appreciate how you appear to your fellow-men; and to bring it home to you, I will suppose your story to be true. I will suppose—and God forgive me for supposing it—that Damien faltered and stumbled in his narrow path of duty; I will suppose that, in the horror of his isolation, perhaps in the fever of incipient disease, he, who was doing so much more than he had sworn, failed in the letter of his priestly oath—he, who was so much a better man than either you or me, who did what we have never dreamed of daring—he too tasted of our common frailty. "O, Iago, the pity of it!" The least tender should be moved to tears; the most incredulous to prayer. And all that you could do was to pen your letter to the Reverend H. B. Gage!

Is it growing at all clear to you what a picture you have drawn of your own heart? I will try yet once again to make it clearer. You had a father: suppose this tale were about him, and some informant brought it to you, proof in hand: I am not making too high an estimate of your emotional nature when I suppose you would

regret the circumstance? that you would feel the tale of frailty the more keenly since it shamed the author of your days? and that the last thing you would do would be to publish it in the religious press? Well, the man who tried to do what Damien did, is my father, and the father of the man in the Apia bar, and the father of all who love goodness; and he was your father too, if God had given you grace to see it.

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